

# Winter Driving Tips

When the chilly temperatures of winter set in, will your vehicle be ready for the cold?

## Before You Go

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### Get Your Car Serviced

Visit your mechanic for a tune-up and ask them to check for leaks, badly worn hoses, or other needed parts, repairs, and replacements.



### Check for Recalls

NHTSA's Recalls Look-up Tool lets you enter a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to quickly learn if your vehicle has a critical safety issue that has not been repaired, and how to get that repair done for FREE. Check [www.nhtsa.gov/recalls](http://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls).



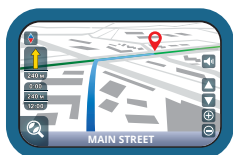
### Know Your Car

Read your vehicle's manual to familiarize yourself with the safety features on your vehicle—such as antilock brakes and electronic stability control—and how the features perform in wintry conditions. When renting a car, become familiar with the vehicle before driving it off the lot.



### Plug It In

For electric and hybrid-electric vehicles, minimize the drain on the battery. If the vehicle has a thermal heating pack for the battery, plug your vehicle in whenever it's not in use. Start your vehicle and preheat the interior before you unplug your vehicle in the morning.



### Plan Your Travel and Route

Before heading out, make sure to check the weather, road conditions, and traffic. Don't rush through your trip, and allow plenty of time to get to your destination safely. And always familiarize yourself with directions and maps before you go, even if you use a GPS system, and let others know your route and anticipated arrival time.

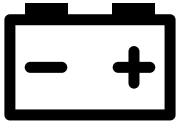
### Stock Your Vehicle

Carry items in your vehicle to handle common winter driving-related tasks, and supplies you might need in an emergency, including:

- Snow shovel, broom, and ice scraper;
- Abrasive material such as sand or kitty litter, in case your vehicle gets stuck in the snow;
- Jumper cables, flashlight, and warning devices such as flares and emergency markers;
- Blankets for protection from the cold; and
- A cell phone with charger, water, food, and any necessary medicine (for longer trips or when driving in lightly populated areas).



## Vehicle Safety Checklist



### Battery

When the temperature drops, so does battery power. For gasoline and diesel engines, it takes more battery power to start your vehicle in cold weather. For electric and hybrid-electric vehicles, the driving range is reduced when the battery is cold. Have your mechanic check your battery, charging system, and belts, and have them make any necessary repairs or replacements. For hybrid-electric vehicles, keep gasoline in the tank to support the gasoline engine.



### Lights

Check your headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, and interior lights. Be sure to also check your trailer brake lights and turn signals, if necessary.



### Cooling System

Make sure you have enough coolant in your vehicle, and that the coolant meets the manufacturer's specifications. See your vehicle owner's manual for specific recommendations on coolant. You or a mechanic should check the cooling system for leaks, test the coolant, and drain or replace old coolant as needed.

### Vehicle Safety Checklist *continued*



#### Windshield Washer Reservoir

You can go through a lot of windshield wiper fluid fairly quickly in a single snowstorm, so be prepared for whatever might come your way by ensuring your vehicle's reservoir is full of high-quality "winter" fluid with de-icer before winter weather hits.

#### Windshield Wipers and Defrosters

Make sure defrosters and windshield wipers - both front and rear - work, and replace any worn blades. You may also want to consider installing heavy-duty winter wipers if you live in an area that gets a lot of snow and ice.



#### Floor Mats

Improperly installed floor mats in your vehicle may interfere with the operation of the accelerator or brake pedal, increasing the risk of a crash. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for mat installation, use retention clips to secure the mat and prevent it from sliding forward, and always use mats that are the correct size and fit for your vehicle.

## Tire Safety

As the outside temperature drops, so does tire inflation pressure. Make sure each tire is filled to the vehicle manufacturer's recommended inflation pressure, which is listed in your owner's manual and on a placard located on the driver's side door frame. The correct pressure is NOT the number listed on the tire. Be sure to check the tires' air pressure when they are cold, which means the car hasn't been driven for at least three hours. Read through for safe tire tips:

- Regardless of season, inspect your tires at least once a month and before long road trips. It only takes about five minutes. If you find yourself driving under less-than-optimal road conditions this winter, you'll be glad you took the time. Don't forget to check your spare tire.
- You should inspect your tires for any damage or conditions that may require their replacement. Check the tread and sidewalls for any cuts, punctures, bulges, scrapes, cracks or bumps. In case you see any damage, take your vehicle to a tire service professional for further inspection.
- If you plan to use snow tires, have them installed in the fall so you are prepared before it snows. Check out [www.nhtsa.gov/tires](http://www.nhtsa.gov/tires) for tire ratings before buying new ones, and look for winter tires with the snowflake symbol.
- Look closely at your tread and replace tires that have uneven wear or insufficient tread. Tread should be at least 2/32 of an inch or greater on all tires.
- Check the age of each tire. Some vehicle manufacturers recommend that tires be replaced every six years regardless of use, but check your owner's manual to find out.
- For more information on tire safety, visit NHTSA's [Tires](http://www.nhtsa.gov/tires) page.



# Safety First

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## Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones

Always wear your seat belt every trip, every time—and ensure that everyone else in your vehicle is buckled-up in age- and size-appropriate car seats, booster seats, or seat belts.



## Protect Your Children

- Remember that all children under age 13 should always ride properly buckled in the back seat.
- Make sure car seats and booster seats are properly installed and that any children riding with you are in the right seat for their ages and sizes. See NHTSA's [child passenger safety recommendations](#) to find out [how to select the right car seat](#) for your child's age and size. To learn more and find a free car seat inspection station near you, please visit the [Child Car Seat Inspection Station Locator](#).
- Though thick outerwear will keep your children warm, it can interfere with the proper harness fit on your child in a car seat. Choose thin, warm layers for your child instead, and place blankets or coats around your child **after** the harness is snug and secure for extra warmth.
- Never leave your child unattended in or around your vehicle.
- Always remember to lock your vehicle and to keep your keys out of reach when exiting so children do not play or get trapped inside.

## On the Road



### Stay Alert

Keep your gas tank close to full whenever possible, and, on longer trips, plan enough time to stop to stretch, get something to eat, return calls or text messages, and change drivers or rest if you feel drowsy.



### Avoid Risky Driving Behaviors

You know the rules: Do not text or drive distracted; obey posted speed limits; and always drive sober. Both alcohol and drugs whether legal or illicit can cause impairment. It is illegal to drive impaired by any substance in all States – no exceptions. Alcohol and drugs can impair the skills critical for safe and responsible driving such as coordination, judgment, perception, and reaction time.

### Safety First: On the Road *continued*

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#### Driving in Winter Conditions

Slow down. It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface.



#### Navigating Around Snow Plows

Don't crowd a snow plow or travel beside it. Snow plows travel slowly, make wide turns, stop often, overlap lanes, and exit the road frequently. However, the road behind an active snow plow is safer to drive on. If you find yourself behind a snow plow, stay behind it or use caution when passing.

### In an Emergency

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#### What to Do in a Winter Emergency

If you are stopped or stalled in wintry weather, follow these safety rules:

- Stay with your car and don't overexert yourself.
- Put bright markers on the antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light turned on.
- To avoid asphyxiation from carbon monoxide poisoning, don't run your car for long periods of time with the windows up or in an enclosed space. If you must run your vehicle, clear the exhaust pipe of any snow and run it only sporadically — just long enough to stay warm.

