

FLEETING IDEAS

Preparing for Winter Driving

Most drivers understand the importance of keeping their vehicle in good mechanical condition at any time of year. When winter comes, the condition of your vehicle is even more important than at other times of year. This means that brakes, wipers/wiper fluid, brake lights, tires, mirrors, headlights & running lights, tire pressure, turn signals, oil, etc. should all be checked at appropriate time intervals.

Don't try to get those last few miles from a set of tires. Make certain that tread depth is well above the minimum. To provide maximum visibility, headlights, taillights, mirrors, windshield and all windows should be kept clean at all times - all year round. When clearing snow/ice off your vehicle, don't take shortcuts.

When you are approaching a curve or intersection, start braking early! If your vehicle is equipped with ABS, a steady, firm pressure on the brake pedal is suggested. Without ABS on your vehicle, use the "squeeze braking" technique. This is where you gradually increase pedal pressure until you reach the point where the vehicle almost starts slipping.

Winter driving conditions accentuate every mechanical problem and driver mistake. Increase your following distance and scan even

farther ahead. Use your low-beam headlights and running lights any time there is reduced visibility or when you are using your windshield wipers. If you are familiar with the road you are on, use this to your advantage and anticipate upcoming hills or curves. When you are driving on an icy road, there is no such thing as a safe speed. On icy roads, 4x4 vehicles will skid/slide just as easily as any other vehicle.

Key Points

- Before freezing weather arrives, have your vehicle serviced and inspected.
- Get an earlier start so that you will have time to clear ice and snow from your vehicle.
- Accelerate and apply brakes gradually to avoid skidding and maintain steering control.
- Start by going no faster than half the posted speed limit. If you encounter extremely slippery conditions, cut your speed in half again.
- Plan as though you will have to come to a complete stop at every intersection and make sure you have time to get completely through the intersection before you begin to cross.
- Suggested emergency equipment: flashlight, blanket, flares/reflectors, spare tire, a few tools, shovel, sand, cell phone, etc.

