

SMART THINKING

Winter 2023

Winter Driving Safety

Unpredictable winter weather can seriously impact your travel plans and daily commute. The best way to stay safe is to be prepared. See our safety tips below to keep you safe and prepared on the road this winter:

Driving Safely:

- Always clear any excess ice and snow from all parts of your vehicle before driving, including the roof. Additionally, keep your windshield, headlights, and brake lights clear of ice and snow at all times.
- Brake gently to avoid skidding.
- Reduce your speed and allow extra time to stop on slippery, snow-covered roads
- Be cautious on bridges and overpasses as they tend to freeze before other roadways.
- Leave earlier, allowing extra time to reach your destination, accounting for slower travel if necessary.
- Even four-wheel drive and all-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads, so drive cautiously and keep extra space between you and the vehicle in front of you.

Be Prepared with Your Own Winter Vehicle Emergency Kit:

- **Snow brush & ice scraper:** An essential tool for clearing off snow and ice from your vehicle.
- **First aid kit:** This is crucial if someone is injured, allowing you to assist until help arrives.
- **Emergency roadside flares or reflective safety markers:** In addition to using your fourway flashers, utilizing flares and safety markers will help you stay visible in an emergency. It will also help signal other motorists that you may be in distress and need assistance – getting you help faster.

- **Sand, rock salt, or cat litter:** In the event your vehicle gets stuck, spread the sand, salt, or cat litter around your tires to help regain traction.
- **Flashlight and batteries:** Winter brings shorter days and darker commutes. In the event of an emergency, stay visible to other drivers by holding a flashlight.
- **Cell phone charger:** Your cell phone will be needed in an emergency; don't let a low or dead battery prevent you from calling for help.
- **Jumper cables:** Cold weather can reduce the life of your vehicle's battery. Keep jumper cables on hand in the event your car battery dies.
- **Small shovel:** This will be handy for moving snow away from your vehicle.
- **Gloves, hats, & blankets:** Prepare yourself for the worst. If you must leave your vehicle in an emergency or are waiting in a cold car for help to arrive, stay warm by bundling up with blankets, a hat, and gloves.
- **Food/snacks:** Roadside assistance might take longer to arrive during a severe storm. Keep water and a supply of snacks in your vehicle to help you stay hydrated and to maintain body heat. Snacks can especially be handy if you have children with you, as it may help keep them calm while you wait for help to arrive.



Winter Slip and Fall Prevention and Safety

According to Injury Prevention and Control statistics from the CDC, slip-and-fall injuries are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries reported among all age groups in the U.S. It is critical for property owners and property maintenance contractors to monitor and manage the melt and refreeze exposures on walkways and parking areas where there is regular foot traffic.

Snow and ice melt during the day will often refreeze overnight, creating slippery walking conditions by morning. The resulting thin layer of ice is referred to as "black ice" and may look like wet pavement at first glance but could pose a hazardous slip-and-fall risk.

Here are some tips to proactively manage your property throughout the winter:

- **Don't wait. Beat the storm:** Applying ice melt to driveways & walkways before weather events prevents ice from sticking to the surface.
- **Control the runoff:** Snow should be piled at the low areas of your lot, if possible, to prevent melt runoff, and refreeze over common walking areas.
- **Inspect rain gutters and downspouts:** Avoid having water flow from these onto walkways, which can freeze and become a slip-and-fall hazard.
- **Mix it up with sand:** Applying store-bought rock salt or calcium chloride ice melt is a great way to melt ice accumulation on the ground; however, the melted ice may still freeze overnight. Using a rock salt and sand mixture or spreading sand on top of the ice melt once applied is best. The sand will help prevent the wet surface from re-freezing and will provide some extra grip for pedestrians.
- **Timing is everything:** Areas of melt and refreeze are most dangerous in the early morning hours and at night. It's best to treat these areas early before opening for business.
- **Make a plan:** If you or an employee will be responsible for snow removal or clearing walkways, make a plan to designate who is accountable, monitor conditions regularly, and document each time areas are cleared or treated.
- **Routine inspection:** Conduct periodic walkthroughs of the property to look for areas of risk (water runoff, low areas where water tends to pool) and ensure that proper safety measures are in place.
- **Hiring a snow and ice removal contractor:** If hiring a contractor for snow and ice control on your property, ensure you have a contract in place that specifies responsibilities in the agreement.

Kitchen Cooking Safety Tips

According to the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA), an average of 172,900 house fires per year are caused by cooking - causing an average of 550 deaths and 4,820 injuries annually. More than half of these home fire related injuries involving cooking equipment were a result of people attempting to fight the fire themselves.

Follow these kitchen fire safety tips to help keep you and your family safe:

- Never leave the range or cooktop unattended while cooking, and make sure burners are always off when leaving the kitchen, even for a short time. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home cooking fires and related deaths in the U.S.
- Be sure to keep your oven and cooktop clean to avoid old food drippings or remains from burning or starting a fire.
- Watch hot oil closely and have the lid for the pan nearby so that in the event of a fire, use the lid to cover the pan to extinguish the fire. Never put water on hot oil.
- Keep a 'kid-free zone' around the stove or oven while in use, and avoid allowing small children and pets in the kitchen while cooking.
- Avoid wearing loose or hanging clothes that could catch on fire.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby and charged, and know how to use it.
- Keep cooking area free of combustibles such as paper, oven mitts, towels, or other items that could catch fire.
- Keep smoke alarms in working order.
- Don't store items in the oven; you may forget about them and turn the oven on, causing a fire.
- The kitchen floor should be kept clear of tripping hazards while cooking.
- If an oven fire does start, keep the door closed and turn off the heat source; the same goes for a microwave.
- Always use a timer to avoid forgetting about cooking food.



Stay safe this winter season. Take a moment to watch our video on fireplace safety.