

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Engineering District 5-0

1713 Lehigh Street

Allentown, PA 18103

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Contact: Ronald J. Young, Jr.
District Press Officer
(610) 798-4123
ronyoung@state.pa.us

Sean D. Pressmann
Safety Press Officer
spressman@state.pa.us

CAREFUL DRIVING PRACTICES FOR DRIVING IN HARSH ROAD CONDITIONS

Winter driving can be tricky and dangerous. Careful driving practices are your best defense against crashes. To keep your experience with winter driving from becoming a crash-course, here are a few driving tips from PennDOT:

- ▶ Give yourself plenty of extra time for getting to your destination. Speed limits are for perfect, dry conditions. On icy roadways, going too fast for conditions could be deadly.
- ▶ Take the time to clear all windows of snow and ice before starting out. Also clear any snow off the hood, roof and trunk - it comes loose when driving.
- ▶ Even though you can see, drive with low-beam headlights in snow, rain and fog. Keep all lenses free of dirt by wiping them periodically. Dirty headlights can significantly reduce visibility. Don't forget the directional lights and taillights.
- ▶ Be sure your tires have adequate tread for traction in snow. You may hear that putting extra weight in the trunk or truck bed gives better traction. Traction might be helped a little but at the expense of steering control and longer stopping distance. Likewise, you may hear that reducing tire pressure is another way of increasing traction. Reducing air pressure will not give you more traction and your tires could become seriously under-inflated, affecting steering. Remember too that under-inflated tires are a major cause of tire failure.
- ▶ Ice forms first and lasts longer on bridges, elevated ramps and in the shade. If you hit an unexpected ice patch, don't try to brake, accelerate or downshift. Let up on your accelerator and let your vehicle "roll" through the slippery area. When freezing rain is occurring resulting in icing conditions, please pull over to the side of the road until the road has been treated with anti-skid materials and and/or salt.
- ▶ If you go into a skid, act quickly by taking your foot off the accelerator. Keep your foot off the brake and steer in the direction the rear of the vehicle is skidding. Hold the steering wheel firmly, but don't make large turns. Use a light touch to correct the swerve.
- ▶ Review your vehicle owner's manual. It will usually recommend the braking technique most effective for your car.

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- ▶ Maintain at least three times the normal following distance when driving during a snow or ice storm so that you can slow down or brake gradually. Be prepared to adjust speed and/or stop to avoid colliding with the vehicle in front of you. Plan ahead when approaching intersections so that braking can be done smoothly.
- ▶ Don't stray from the beaten path. Stay in line when traveling during a winter storm. Don't blaze your own trail, especially going downhill - you'll only manage to create a worse situation. You could even block the only space emergency vehicles have to travel.
- ▶ In addition to keeping yourself in the vehicle during a collision by wearing a seat belt, seat belts and child safety seats will also keep your child from being thrown around inside or from your vehicle should you go into a skid or hit an object.
- ▶ Bad weather can cause deer to be on the move. Be particularly alert when traveling in known areas of deer migration. When you see deer or other animals ahead, slow down and be prepared to stop until you are safely past them. A good defensive driving technique is to try to avoid animals, however, do not swerve into the on-coming lane and risk a head-on collision, or run off the road and risk hitting another object.
- ▶ When walking on snow or ice, use short steps and keep your hands out of your pockets. This will help you maintain your balance. If you do fall, tuck your arms close to your body and roll with the fall – trying to “break” your fall by using your arms may result in broken bones.
- ▶ Plow trucks do not travel at high speeds. Therefore, you'll tend to come up on them quickly. Slow down. Plow trucks will pull over periodically to let traffic pass. Never try to pass a plow truck because it is dangerous due to blowing snow. The best advice is to stay six car lengths behind a plow truck.

This winter PennDOT will continue to have a toll-free number for motorists to call for up-to-date interstate travel conditions. The toll-free number is 1-888-783-6783 or 1-717-783-5186 for outside Pennsylvania.