Spinning Out of Control with Winter Road Hazards



Safety Talk

What's at Stake?

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous. Getting caught in a winter storm can be downright deadly if you aren't prepared.

What's the Danger?

Driving when the temps turns frigid and snow and ice make roads treacherous can leave you spinning out of control and into oncoming traffic. Slick and impassable roads, and decreased visibility, can leave you stranded, scared and with no idea when help might arrive. Cold temperatures can quickly lead to frostbite, hypothermia and death if you aren't prepared.

How to Protect Yourself

Knowing how to safely drive in winter weather and what to do if you become stranded are two of the best ways to protect yourself during winter road trips.

Winter Driver Tips

Make sure your vehicle is in peak operating condition. This includes keeping your tires properly inflated, ensuring your battery can handle the cold temps and keeping your gas tank at least half full.

- Watch the weather. Delay trips when bad weather is expected and if you must leave, let others know your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.
- Use your seat belt every time you get into your vehicle.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly.
    - Apply the gas slowly to accelerate, to regain traction and to avoid skids.
    - Know your brakes. For example, if you have anti-lock brakes and need to slow down quickly, press hard on the pedal.
- Drive slowly and increase your following distance to at least 8 seconds when road and weather conditions are bad.
- If possible, avoid using your parking brake.
    - You don't want to lock the brakes and lose the ability to steer.
- Don't use the cruise control in wet weather.
    - To prevent loss of traction, you may need to reduce your speed by lifting

off the accelerator, which you cannot do when the cruise control is engaged.
- If you do start to skid or slide always look and steer in the direction you want the front of your vehicle to go.

Stranded. Now What?

- Stay with your vehicle. It provides shelter and makes it easier for rescuers to locate you.
- Don’t try to walk in a severe storm. It’s easy to lose sight of your vehicle in blowing snow and become lost.
- Use whatever is available to keep warm. If possible, run the engine and heater just long enough to remove the chill and to conserve gasoline.
- Check the exhaust pipe isn’t clogged with snow, ice or mud before turning the vehicle on. A blocked exhaust could cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to leak into the passenger compartment when the engine is running.
- Signal for help. Tie a brightly colored cloth to the antenna or place a cloth at the top of a rolled-up window to signal distress. At night, keep the dome light on if possible. It only uses a small amount of electricity and will make it easier for rescuers to find you.
- Finally, have a well-stocked emergency kit in your vehicle. It should include, food, water, blankets, and other winter weather necessities.

Final Word

Don’t let safety spin out of control while in your vehicle this winter. Practice safe winter driving when the weather and roads are dangerous and smart survival skills if stranded.