Be Aware!

Winter Storm Watches and Warnings.

- A **winter storm watch** indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area.
- A **winter storm warning** indicates that severe winter weather conditions are definitely on the way or are already here.
- A **blizzard warning** means that large amounts of falling or blowing snow and sustained winds of at least 35 miles per hour are expected for several hours.

If you don't have to drive, don't.

Pay attention to the news.

Local radio and television stations provide up-to-date weather information. Investing in a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio is another way to receive weather and other emergency alerts. In addition, the Iowa Department of Transportation offers real-time information on current road conditions on their website or by calling 5-1-1.

Be Ready Iowa

www.beready.iowa.gov

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Our Mission

To support, coordinate and maintain state and local homeland security and emergency management activities in order to establish sustainable communities and assure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

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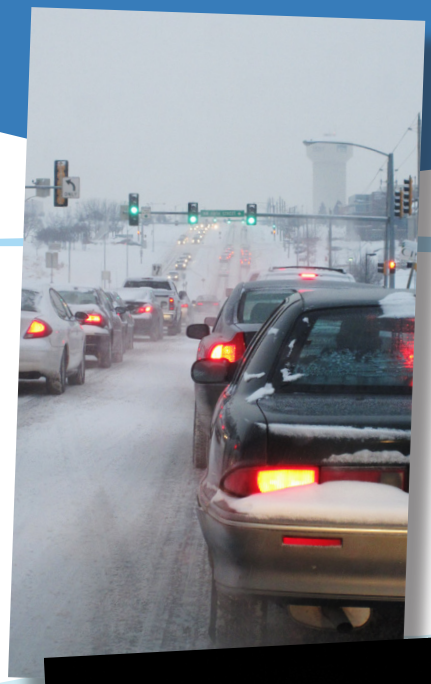
Winter Driving

A Guide for Your Safety



Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management Division

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. Preparing your vehicle for the winter season and knowing how to react if stranded or lost on the road are the keys to safe winter driving.

Be Ready, BEFORE You Drive!

1 Before you drive, have a mechanic check the following items on your car:

- Battery
- Antifreeze
- Wipers/windshield washer fluid
- Ignition system
- Thermostat
- Lights/flashing hazard lights
- Exhaust System
- Heater/Defroster
- Brakes
- Oil level (if necessary, replace existing oil with a winter grade oil or the SAE 10w/30 weight variety)

2 Take the proper precautions to outfit you and your car for winter driving:

- Install good winter tires. Make sure they have adequate tread.
- Maintain at least half a tank of gas at all times.
- Plan long trips carefully. Listen to the radio or call 511 for the latest road conditions. Always travel during daylight and if possible, do not travel alone.
- If you must go out during a winter storm, use public transportation.
- Dress warmly. Wear loose-fitting, layered, lightweight clothing.

3 Keep the following items in your car at all times during the winter months:

- Flashlights with extra batteries
- First aid kit with a pocketknife
- Necessary medications
- Blankets and/or sleeping bags
- Extra newspapers for insulation
- Plastic bags (for sanitation)
- Matches
- Extra set of mittens, socks and a wool cap
- Rain gear and extra clothes
- Small sack of sand or kitty litter to generate traction under car wheels
- Small shovel and other tools (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Jumper cables
- Brightly-colored cloth (red) to use as a flag
- Canned fruit/nuts and non-electric can opener
- Bottled water

If You Get Trapped in Your Car DURING a Blizzard...

- Stay in the car. Do not leave to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. You may become disoriented and lost in blowing and drifting snow.
- Hang a brightly-colored cloth on the radio antenna and raise the hood to draw attention.
- Do minor exercises to keep up circulation. Clap hands and move arms and legs. Try not to stay in one position for too long. If more than one person is in the car, take turns sleeping.
- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise like snow shoveling or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.
- Run the engine occasionally to keep warm. Turn the engine on for about 10 minutes each hour. Run the heater and turn on the dome light while the car is running. Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow, and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation.
- For warmth, huddle together.

Frostbite and Hypothermia

- Frostbite is a severe reaction to cold exposure that can be permanently damaging. Symptoms include: loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in fingers, toes, or nose and earlobes.
- Hypothermia can be brought on when the body temperature drops to less than 90°F. Symptoms include uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, stumbling, drowsiness, and exhaustion.
- If frostbite or hypothermia is suspected, begin warming the person slowly and seek immediate medical assistance. Warm the person's trunk first. Use your own body heat to help. Arms and legs should be warmed last because stimulation of the limbs can drive cold blood toward the heart and lead to heart failure. Put the person in dry clothing and wrap their entire body in a blanket.
- Never give a frostbite or hypothermia victim something with caffeine or alcohol in it. Caffeine, a stimulant, can cause the heart to beat faster and alcohol, a depressant, can slow the heart. Both can hasten the ill effects of cold body temperatures.