

# Practice Safe Winter Driving

The cold weather means a few different things for people, like shoveling snow, kids' sled races, and treacherous driving conditions.



**Snowy road conditions can make for treacherous driving conditions. Use caution and common sense when traveling the roads this winter.**

Snow, sleet and ice can make for difficult driving, even for experienced people behind the wheel. For example, from 2004-06, the Ohio State Highway Patrol recorded 105 fatalities on snowy or icy Ohio roads and there were nearly 15,000 injury accidents. As we prepare to once again enter the season of tricky road conditions, it may pay for drivers of all ages to undergo a refresher course in safe winter driving techniques.

\* Before you leave the building, check the latest weather report. It will help you anticipate any approaching storms and plan accordingly. Keep the radio tuned to a traffic and weather station to keep abreast of any changing situations, accidents or weather warnings.

\* Prepare your vehicle by stocking it with winter survival necessities. Winter weather can often mean breakdowns. Getting caught on the side of the road for a few hours can be treacherous in sub-zero weather. Make sure that you have certain supplies in your trunk for such emergencies. Stock up on road flares, a warm blanket, a battery-powered radio, a flashlight, bottled water, extra windshield washer fluid, sand or cat litter (this can be used to provide traction if your wheels are slipping trying to get in and out of a parking spot or ditch), a first aid kit, and a cell phone.

\* Try to keep a full tank of gas during cold weather so that the fuel lines won't freeze.

\* Winter driving

requires different tactics. One of the best tips is to slow down. Also leave much more space between your vehicle and others on the road; winter road conditions often require longer stopping times. Start braking very early on as you approach any intersections to compensate for skidding. Avoid abrupt actions while operating the vehicle. Sudden stopping, steering or accelerating can cause you to lose control of the car.

\* Many people purchase SUVs because they think that 4-wheel-drive vehicles will enable them to drive in snowy conditions without making any changes to their driving behavior. This is not the case. It's important to note that SUVs do not provide invincibility in winter conditions. They may offer a bit more traction on snowy roads, but all bets are off for any vehicle when there is ice underfoot. Every driver should be cautious and slow down.

\* Impaired visibility from slush and salt being

kicked up on the windshield can make driving dangerous. Keep windshield washer reservoirs topped off. Also, it may pay to purchase windshield wipers that are geared toward the winter and can clear snow and ice more easily.

\* Pay attention and don't take your eyes off of the road. Look further ahead in traffic so that you'll be able to determine conditions and anticipate what moves you'll have to make based on the behaviors of drivers up ahead. Staying alive in a winter accident could require split-second decisions.

\* Remember that trucks are heavier than cars and will require even more time for stopping. Don't cut off a truck -- or any vehicle -- in snowy conditions.

\* Use your brakes correctly. If you have anti-lock brakes, you should simply apply slow, steady pressure. Pumping the brakes is only for older vehicles without ABS systems.

# Proper Tire Care is First Line of Defense

For most people, their car is their lifeblood. It gets them to work, to school, to their lives. And in these tough times, many are keeping their cars longer than ever before. It might be tempting to neglect regular maintenance tasks in the name of saving money, but in the long run, that could end up costing you even more. And proper maintenance is crucial now, with winter just around the corner.



**Keeping tires properly inflated is the first line of defense in safeguarding a vehicle from accidents on the road this winter.**

When it comes to car maintenance, tire care is the first line of defense. But according to the Rubber Manufacturers Association (RMA), an alarming number of consumers don't pay attention to their tires, and the results can be costly -- and dangerous. Underinflated tires pose a definite safety risk:

\* The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) acknowledges that underinflated tires contribute to many accidents throughout the year

\* 50 percent of vehicles have at least one underinflated tire

\* And only 9 percent of vehicles have four properly inflated tires!

But it doesn't have to be this way; proper tire care is simple. Continental Tire recommends getting in the habit of taking five minutes every month to check your tires, including the spare.

"Your tires are the only part of your vehicle that actually touch the road when you drive," says Joerg Burfien, director of R & D, Continental Tire. "It only takes a couple of minutes of maintenance each month to keep your tires working at their best, and the resulting safety benefits far outweigh the time it takes."

The RMA's "PART" campaign gives consumers an easy way to remember the basics of monthly tire maintenance:

**Pressure:** According to the RMA, underinflation is a tire's no. 1 enemy. It results in unnecessary tire stress, irregular wear, loss of control, and accidents. A tire can lose up to half of its air pressure and

not appear to be flat! And the air pressure listed on the side of your tire is NOT the correct air pressure for your vehicle. That number is the maximum air pressure for the tire. The correct tire pressure can be found in the car's owner manual, on the gas tank lid, on the driver's side door edge, and on the door post.

**Alignment:** A bad jolt from hitting a curb or pothole can throw your front end out of alignment and damage your tires. Misalignment of wheels in the front or rear can cause uneven and rapid treadwear.

**Rotation:** Regularly rotating your vehicle's tires will help achieve more uniform wear. Unless your vehicle owner's manual has a specific recommendation, the guideline for tire rotation is approximately every 6,000-8,000 miles.

**Tread:** To prevent hydroplaning and skidding, your tires must have proper tread depth. The minimum tread depth is 2/32 of an inch (1.6 mm).

The easiest way to check your tread depth is the penny test. Take a penny and place it in the tread of your tire. If part of Lincoln's head is covered by the tread, your tires have enough tread. If you can see Lincoln's entire head, you should buy a new tire.

In regions with harsh

winters, Continental recommends that drivers switch to winter tires when the temperature dips below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Colder weather brings on a whole new set of driving challenges -- slush, ice and hard-packed snow -- and once the temperature drops below that 45-degree mark, so does an all-season tire's ability to grip the road.

Many cars in the U.S. have all-season tires, but they just aren't built to hold the road in the same way that winter tires do. Winter tires provide safety and control in cold weather as well as snow and ice, because they are specifically engineered to deliver a 25 to 50 percent increase in traction over all-season radials. That's enough added traction and braking power to avoid a severe weather-related accident, Burfien said.

Take care of your tires during winter and they will take care of you. Remember your winter tires are not designed just for snow. They are designed to increase traction in cold winter conditions. Make the switch to winter tires when the temperature hits 45 degrees.

# Automotive Timeline

For centuries, people have been obsessed with the automobile. While most think that Henry Ford was responsible for all things auto, there were many inventors who developed ideas for powered vehicles before Ford was in the picture. In fact, vehicles capable of human transport have been demonstrated as early as 1769, and were powered by steam. Here are some other automotive facts and important dates.

\* In 1916, 55 percent of all cars were Ford Model Ts.

\* Early cars did not have steering wheels. Drivers used a lever to steer.

\* The first recorded speeding ticket was issued in 1902.

\* Powered windshield wipers became standard

equipment on many cars in 1923.

\* The car radio was introduced in 1929.

\* In 1963, seatbelts were offered as standard equipment.

\* Popular car brands were named after the people who started the companies. Here are some of the more notable:

- David Buick

- Antoine Cadillac
- Louis Chevrolet
- Walter Chrysler
- Gottlieb Daimler
- John & Horace Dodge
- Enzo Ferrari
- Henry Ford
- Ransom Olds
- Ferdinand Porsche

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