

Driving in the winter means snow, sleet, and ice that can lead to slower traffic, hazardous road conditions, hot tempers and unforeseen dangers. To help you make it safely through winter, here are some suggestions from the National Safety Council to make sure that you and your vehicle are prepared.

Weather: At any temperature from – Minus 29 degrees Celsius (-20⁰F) or 32 degrees Celsius (90⁰ F) -- weather affects road and driving conditions and can pose serious problems. It is important to listen to forecasts on radio, TV, cable weather channel, or forecasts in the daily papers.

Your Car :Prepare your car for winter. Start with a checkup that includes:

- Checking the ignition, brakes, wiring, hoses and fan belts.
- Changing and adjusting the spark plugs.
- Checking the air, fuel and emission filters, and the PCV valve.
- Inspecting the distributor.
- Checking the battery.
- Checking the tires for air, sidewall wear and tread depth.
- Checking antifreeze level and the freeze line.

Your car should have a tune-up (check the owner's manual for the recommended interval) to ensure better gas mileage, quicker starts and faster response on pick-up and passing power.

Necessary Equipment: An emergency situation on the road can arise at any time and you must be prepared. Following the tune-up, a full tank of gas, and fresh anti-freeze, your trunk should carry:

- A properly inflated spare tire, wheel wrench and jack.
- A shovel.
- Jumper cables.
- Tow and tire chains.
- A bag of salt or cat litter.
- Tool kit.

Essential Supplies: Be prepared with a "survival kit" that should always remain in the car. Replenish after use. Essential supplies include:

- Working flashlight and extra batteries.
- Reflective triangles and brightly colored cloth.
- Compass.
- First aid kit.
- Exterior windshield cleaner.
- Ice scraper and snow brush.
- Wooden stick matches in a waterproof container.
- Scissors and string/cord.
- Non-perishable, high-energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy.

In addition, if you are driving long distances under cold, snowy, and icy conditions, you should also carry supplies to keep you warm such as:

- Heavy woolen mittens, socks, cap, blankets.

If You Become Stranded:

- Do not leave your car unless you know exactly where you are, how far it is to possible help, and are certain you will improve your situation.
- To attract attention, light two flares and place one at each end of the car a safe distance away. Hang a brightly colored cloth from your antenna.
- If you are sure the car's exhaust pipe is not blocked, run the engine and heater for about 10 minutes every hour or so depending upon the amount of gas in the tank.
- To protect yourself from frostbite and hypothermia use the woolen items and blankets to keep warm.
- Keep at least one window open slightly. Heavy snow and ice can seal a car shut. Eat hard candy to keep your mouth moist.