



Winter Driving



Be Prepared, Be Safe!



Consider using
winter tires.

Driving and Winter

Stay alert, slow down, and stay in control — the three key elements to safe winter driving. Drive according to current road and weather conditions. Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you. Avoid situations where you may have to brake suddenly on a slippery surface.

Be Prepared — Driver's Checklist

Get your vehicle winter-ready with a **maintenance check-up**. Don't wait for winter to have your battery, belts, hoses, radiator, oil, lights, brakes, exhaust system, heater/defroster, wipers, and ignition system checked.

The condition of your vehicle's tires is important. Worn and damaged tires can hamper your ability to drive safely. Have them checked or replaced before winter begins. Remember to check tire air pressure frequently, as it decreases in colder weather.

While regular or "all-season" tires, including wide and high-performance tires, may be adequate in some areas, they may not be suitable for driving in the snowbelt regions of southern Ontario and throughout the north. If you live and drive in these areas, consider using **winter tires**. They improve driving safety by providing better traction and handling through snow, slush, and on ice. Installing four winter tires provides greater control and stability. Never mix tires of different tread, size and construction.

Check weather and travel conditions before heading out. Don't take chances if the weather is bad. Allow yourself extra time for travel, or wait until conditions improve. Call the Ministry of Transportation's information number on road conditions, listed in your local phone directory, or see the "Road-Ready and Weather-Wise" section of this booklet.

If you are travelling a long distance, **plan your route** ahead of time. Let someone know of your destination and expected time of arrival.

Wear **comfortable clothing** that doesn't restrict your movement while at the wheel. Keep warm clothing for getting out of your vehicle.

Clear snow and ice from all windows, lights, mirrors, and the roof. After starting your vehicle, wait for the fog to clear from the interior of the windows so you will have good visibility all around.

Make sure your vehicle is **mechanically ready** for the rigours of winter and keep your **gas** tank sufficiently full — at least half a tank is recommended.

Make sure you have **sufficient windshield washer fluid** in the reservoir and that it is rated in the -40°C temperature range. Keep an extra jug in the vehicle.

If you are in an area with cell phone service and have a **cell phone**, use it only when necessary. When you need help, pull well off of the road to make or receive a call. **Remember, dialing *OPP will connect you to the nearest Ontario Provincial Police communications centre.**

PLAY IT SAFE!

Severe winter driving conditions may make you nervous, uncomfortable, or fearful. Stay off the road unless your trip is absolutely necessary. Proper preparation and the right skills will help you face the challenge of winter driving.



Stay alert,
slow down
and stay in
control.

Turn on your
vehicle's full
lighting
system in
poor visibility.

On The Road

Visibility

It is critical for drivers to see and be seen in low light conditions, and when blowing snow and white-outs impair your visibility. Whenever visibility is poor, turn on your vehicle's full lighting system.

Spacing

It takes longer to stop on a slippery road. It's important to leave plenty of space between you and the vehicle ahead. A guide to safe spacing under normal driving conditions is the two-second rule. In winter, and especially during poor weather conditions, double the two-second rule.

Two second rule:

1. Pick a marker on the road ahead, such as a road sign or telephone pole.
2. When the rear of the vehicle ahead passes the marker, count "one thousand and one, one thousand and two".
3. When the front of your vehicle reaches the marker, stop counting. If you reach the marker before you count "one thousand and two," you are following too closely.

Braking

Make sure you know how to use your braking system in all weather and road conditions. Consider taking an advanced driving course that teaches emergency driving skills.

Skidding

In a skid, it's important to regain control of your vehicle, especially if it skids sideways. To do this, decelerate by taking your foot off the brake, step on the clutch or shift to neutral, then look where you want your vehicle to go and steer in that direction.

Snowy Roads

Snow on a road may be hard-packed and slippery as ice. It can also be rutted and full of hard tracks and gullies. Or it can be smooth and soft. Wet snow can make for slushy roads. Heavy slush can build up in the wheel wells of your vehicle and can affect your ability to steer. Remember, look far ahead as you drive, so you can recognize hazards and have plenty of time to respond. Adjust your driving to the road and weather conditions. Slow down and avoid sudden turns of the steering wheel, and sudden braking and accelerating, which could cause a skid.

Ice

Be careful when approaching shaded areas, bridges, and overpasses, as these sections of road freeze much sooner in cold weather and stay frozen long after the sun has risen. Watch out for black ice, areas of the road that appear black and shiny, as they can cause your vehicle to suddenly lose traction. Slow down, keep your foot off the brake, and be ready to shift to neutral or step on the clutch as your vehicle crosses these areas.

Stopping Distances

In winter driving conditions, it takes all vehicles longer to stop on snow-covered roads. Travelling at 90 kilometres per hour, the stopping distance for the average passenger vehicle on loose snow is 213 metres (697 ft.) or 54 car lengths, compared to 121 meters (396 ft.) or 30 car lengths on dry roads. For the average commercial vehicle, the stopping distance jumps to 304 metres (996 ft.) or 14 tractor-trailer lengths.

Snow Spray

On snow-covered highways, large trucks and buses can blow snow onto your windshield leading to a sudden loss of visibility. Always drive defensively and leave enough space to avoid their snow spray.

BE PREPARED

To ensure you are prepared to handle winter road conditions, consider an advanced driver-training course that teaches emergency driving skills.



Know what
to do if it
happens
to you.

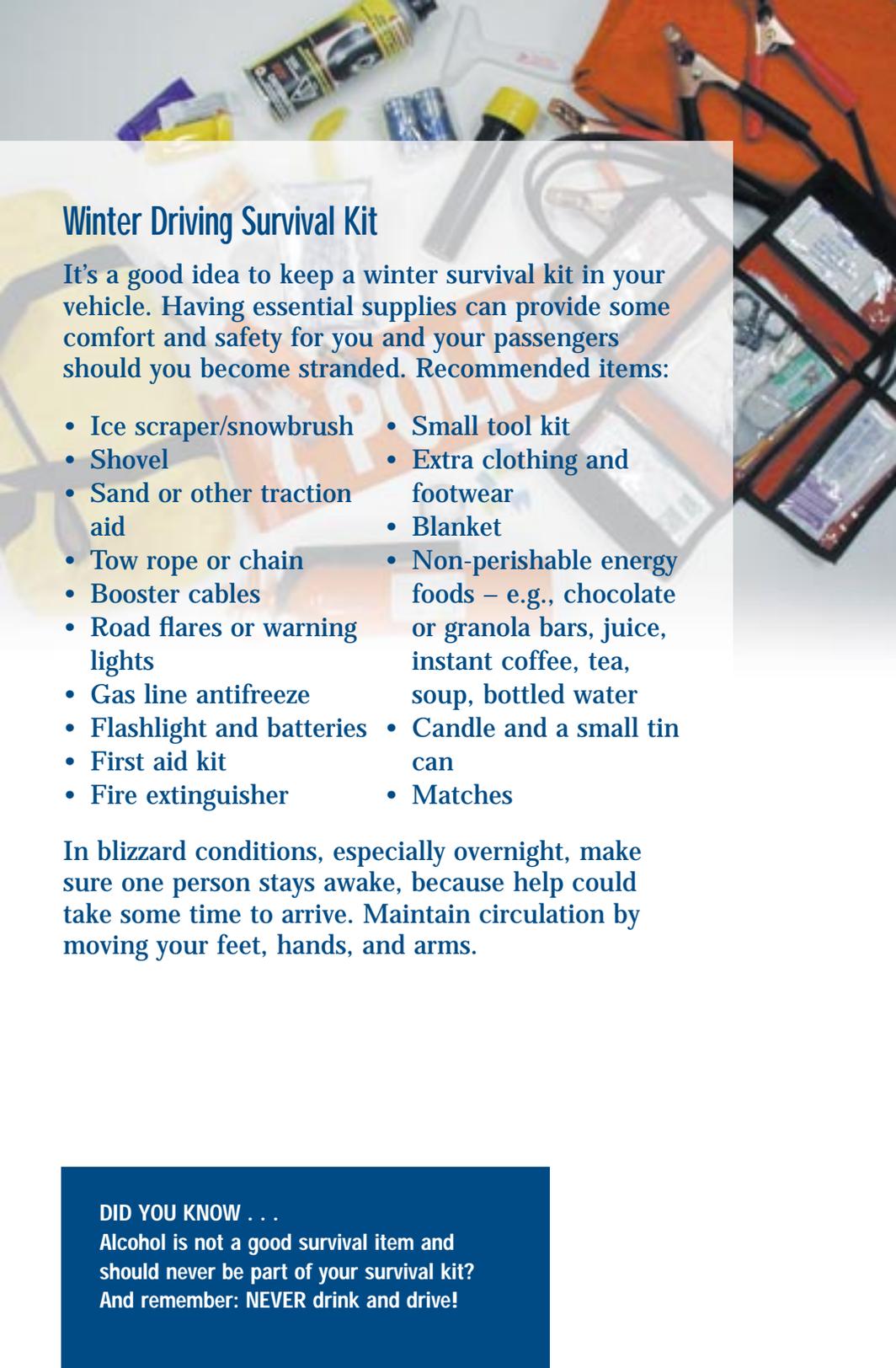
The Unexpected

If you get stuck or stranded, don't panic. Stay with your vehicle for safety and warmth. Wait for help to arrive. If you are in an area with cell phone service and have a cell phone, call for help. **Remember, dialing *OPP will connect you to the nearest Ontario Provincial Police communications centre.**

Be careful if you have to get out of your vehicle when on the shoulder of a busy road. If possible, use the door away from traffic.

If you attempt to free your vehicle from the snow, be careful. Dress warmly, shovel slowly, and do not overexert yourself. Do not attempt to shovel or push your vehicle if you have a medical condition. Body heat is retained when clothing is kept dry. Wet clothing, due to the weather or perspiration, can lead to a dangerous loss of body heat.

Draw attention to your vehicle. Use emergency flashers, flares, or a Call Police sign. Run your motor sparingly. Be careful of exhaust fumes. For fresh air, slightly open a window away from the wind. You may have to exit your vehicle occasionally to make sure the exhaust pipe is clear of drifting snow before running the engine.



Winter Driving Survival Kit

It's a good idea to keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle. Having essential supplies can provide some comfort and safety for you and your passengers should you become stranded. Recommended items:

- Ice scraper/snowbrush
- Shovel
- Sand or other traction aid
- Tow rope or chain
- Booster cables
- Road flares or warning lights
- Gas line antifreeze
- Flashlight and batteries
- First aid kit
- Fire extinguisher
- Small tool kit
- Extra clothing and footwear
- Blanket
- Non-perishable energy foods – e.g., chocolate or granola bars, juice, instant coffee, tea, soup, bottled water
- Candle and a small tin can
- Matches

In blizzard conditions, especially overnight, make sure one person stays awake, because help could take some time to arrive. Maintain circulation by moving your feet, hands, and arms.

DID YOU KNOW . . .

Alcohol is not a good survival item and should never be part of your survival kit? And remember: NEVER drink and drive!