



Ottawa County Sheriff's Office

Even the experienced drivers can find their nerves and skills tested by winter road conditions in Michigan.

Here are some tips to help you drive safely as the weather turns cold and nasty.

Slippery roads, deep snow and freezing temperatures make even short trips challenging for drivers in winter. These adverse conditions can become truly life-threatening if you traveling outside of areas where you can quickly find help and shelter.

When conditions include ice, heavy snow or sub-zero temperatures, try to make other travel arrangements. If you must journey out, let someone know your destination, route taken, and when you expect to arrive or return. Be prepared to turn back or seek refuge if conditions become threatening. When you do arrive at your destination, let someone know of your arrival.

Check on weather conditions along your route and listen to weather forecasts. When you're on the road, be sure to use your seatbelt and put small children in approved safety seats in the backseat of your automobile. Keep your windows clear of ice and snow.

HOW SHOULD YOU PREPARE YOURSELF FOR WINTER DRIVING?

- Plan your driving in advance
- Avoid driving when fatigued
- Contact your local police for "road report" to get updates regarding road conditions in the region to which you are going.
- Check weather conditions for your travel route (and times) before you begin driving.
- Plan your arrival time and destination by taking into account any delays due to slower traffic, reduced visibility, roadblocks, and collisions.
- Inform someone of your route and planned arrival time.
- Choose warm and comfortable clothing.
- Warm up your vehicle before driving off, It reduces moisture condensing on the inside of the windows.
- NEVER warm up your vehicle in a closed garage.
- Remove snow and ice from your vehicle. Its helps to see and, equally important, to be seen.
- Wear sunglasses on bright sunny days.
- Bring a cell phone if you have one, but do not leave it in the car as the battery will freeze.

HOW SHOULD YOU DRIVE IN WINTER WEATHER?

- Buckle up before you start driving. Keep your seatbelt buckled at all times.
- SLOW DOWN! – posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds is the best precautionary measure against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. “Black ice is invisible”
- Be alert. Black ice will make a road look like shiny new asphalt
- Do not use cruise control. Winter driving requires you to be in full control at all times
- Reduce your speed while approaching intersections covered with ice or snow.
- Allow for extra travel time or even consider delaying the trip if the weather is inclement.
- Drive with low-beam headlights on. Not only are they brighter than daytime running lights but they also activate the taillights. This makes your vehicle more visible.
- Lengthen your following distance behind the vehicle ahead of you. Stopping distance on an icy road is double that of stopping on a dry one.
- Stay in the right-hand lane except when passing and use turn signals when changing lanes.
- Steer with smooth and precise movements. Changing lanes too quickly and jerky steering while braking or accelerating can cause skidding.
- Be aware and slow down when you see a sign warning that you are approaching a bridge. Steel and concrete bridges and over passes are likely to be icy when there is no ice on the asphalt surface, (because bridges over open air cool down faster than roads which tend to be insulated somewhat by solid ground).
- Consider getting off the road before getting stranded if the weather is worsening.
- Be patient and pass other cars only when it is safe to do so.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU START TO SKID?

- Look where you want your vehicle to go and steer in this direction
- DO NOT BRAKE
- DO NOT ACCELERATE
- If you are using automatic transmission, shift to neutral, however if you can not do this immediately, do not touch the transmission gear.

HOW SHOULD YOU BRAKE ON SLIPPERY ROAD?

- If the emergency does not require slamming the brakes as hard as possible, squeeze braking (also known as threshold braking) or shifting to neutral will do the job most efficiently.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU GET STUCK OR STARNDDED IN THE SNOW?

- Don't Panic
- Stay in the car if you cannot shovel your car out of the snow.
- Stay in the car in blizzard conditions – Do not leave the car for assistance unless help is visible.
- Turn on flashers or set up flares.
- Run the car engine occasionally (about 10 minutes every hour) to provide heat (and to conserve fuel).
- Bundle up in a blanket
- Wear a hat or scarf- the head and neck are major sources of heat loss from the body.

Sergeant Steve Austin

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