



Safety Management Action Reduction Targeting

TOP 10 MOST UNSAFE WINTER DRIVING HABITS

All professional drivers know that winter conditions bring a lot of special challenges and potential danger. Unfortunately, each winter many drivers find themselves involved in accidents that could have been prevented had safe habits been in place. The following are some of the most common bad habits I have noticed drivers falling into over the years, which often can lead to accidents.

1. **Failing to clear off windows, mirrors, clearance lights, and tail lights often enough.** This should be done every time a driver stops, when traveling in snowy wintertime conditions. Poor driver visibility has contributed too many crashes.
2. **Failing to react soon enough to trouble ahead.** As soon as a problem is spotted, a driver should immediately start to reduce speed and prepare to stop, if necessary. Drivers often underestimate the time/distance they will need to stop.
3. **Failing to check cross-traffic prior to reaching and traveling through an intersection.** Many times cross traffic will skid through an intersection, unable to stop in time. An early visual check may spot this development in time to avoid the crash.
4. **Failing to keep brakes in proper working condition.** Brake troubles are the source of many winter accidents. Drivers should take care to ensure brakes are properly adjusted and working correctly. While driving in wet conditions, increase following distance, and occasionally work the brakes to dry the linings.
5. **Failing to keep tires properly inflated or in good condition.** Tire problems are another key source of wintertime problems and accidents. Cold weather can lead to loss of air pressure or under-inflation. Drivers must check their tires more often in winter. Of special concern is ensuring tires have sufficient tread depth all during the winter season.
6. **Excessive speed for the conditions.** This driving behavior leads to loss of traction, more jackknifes, and loss of control situations than any other and is extremely detrimental in the winter time. Closely related to this error is a driver who is over-confident in his/her abilities.
7. **Continuing to drive in an excessively fatigued condition.** Winter driving is more stressful and more tiring than driving in good weather conditions. Drivers should make more frequent rest stops, and learn to recognize when to stop for the day.
8. **Failing to anticipate or notice changing road/weather conditions.** Weather and road conditions can and do change rapidly. Many accidents have occurred when drivers failed to note the changes and continued to drive in the same way as if the conditions were good. Reduced traction and reduced visibility are the two changes that contribute to most winter time accidents.
9. **Not maintaining sufficient following distance.** Drivers often make the mistake of assuming the amount of following distance they kept in summer will work just as well in the winter.





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Unfortunately, this is not the case. When roads are wet, snow or ice covered, a driver must significantly increase following distance to account for the increase stopping distance that will be needed whenever a stop is required.

10. **Continuing to drive when conditions are unsafe to do so.** Winter season is very unpredictable, and conditions can worsen quickly. All drivers should take extra care to know as best as they can what the forecast conditions are for the trip ahead. Also, if conditions deteriorate to the point where further driving is unsafe, it is advisable to find the nearest safe place to park to wait for conditions to improve.

