



## Winter Driving



**Fact Sheet**

**Do your part to keep our highways safe this winter by planning ahead and always driving according to weather and road conditions. And travel safely around snowplows to make it easier for maintenance crews to clear snow and ice from our roads as quickly and efficiently as possible.**

### **Don't expect clear and dry summer highway conditions in the winter**

The Ministry of Transportation and its highway maintenance contractors work hard to keep Ontario's highways clear and open to traffic during the winter. However, severe storms can exceed their ability to keep highways free of snow and ice. This may be caused by the amount of snow, timing or duration of the storm, high winds, freezing rain or a combination of all of these factors.

### **SLOW DOWN**

- ❖ Always drive according to weather and road conditions. The posted speed limit is intended for ideal road conditions- in poor conditions, reduce your speed.
- ❖ Keep a safe distance between you and the vehicle in front of you to avoid having to brake suddenly. Increase your following distance on wet and slippery surfaces to allow more time to stop.
- ❖ Give yourself extra time to reach your destination, and postpone or cancel your trip if the weather does not improve.

### **STAY ALERT**

- ❖ Winter weather conditions can change quickly, placing extra demands on your vehicle and your driving skills.
- ❖ Keep your focus on the road and on other vehicles around you.
- ❖ Eliminate all distractions and make sure you are well rested before your trip.

### **STAY IN CONTROL**

- ❖ Make sure you know how to handle your vehicle in all weather conditions.
- ❖ Be familiar with your braking system and know how it reacts on snow and ice.
- ❖ Keep your headlights on all the time - don't rely on daytime running lights. Low beams are more effective than high beams in fog or heavy snow conditions.
- ❖ Never use cruise control in winter weather.
- ❖ Signal well in advance of turning to give other motorists time to react to your actions. Check your rearview and side mirrors, and always check the blind spots before changing lanes.
- ❖ Avoid sudden moves by anticipating turns or lane changes. Abrupt changes in direction or slamming on the brakes could cause you to lose control.
- ❖ Remember that bridges and overpasses may be slippery even when other sections of the highway are not.
- ❖ Avoid braking on curves by driving through them at a safe, steady speed.
- ❖ Accelerate slightly when approaching a hill and maintain a steady speed going up.
- ❖ Take your foot off the brake if your vehicle begins to skid and steer in the direction you want to go. Remember your vehicle generally goes where you are looking. When the wheels regain their grip, brake firmly and smoothly.



## Winter Tires



Fact Sheet

### Winter Tires ... right for the season

**Are your tires the right ones for winter driving? Do you drive where there's a lot of snow? The condition and type of tires you use are important for safety.**

If you are like most vehicle owners, you probably have "all-season" tires on your vehicle. While they are designed to handle most driving conditions, they may not be suitable in heavy snow.

#### Proper tires do make a difference for your safety!

Wide or Hi-Performance Tires	Unless designed for snow, traction is limited in snowy conditions.
All-Season Tires	Designed for all-weather performance. Not as effective in heavy snow and slush.
Studded Tires (optional for Northern Ontario residents only)	Most effective on wet ice when the temperature is near zero.
Winter Tires	Deeper tread and a more flexible rubber compound. Best for snow, slush and on ice, as well as wet and dry roads in colder temperatures.

- ❖ All-season tires begin to lose their grip when the temperature drops below +7°C.
- ❖ Winter tires are made for cold and snowy conditions:
  - They remain more flexible than all-season tires providing better traction in colder temperatures.
  - Their deeper tread pattern allows the tire to clear itself of snow as it rotates.
- ❖ Studded tires are most effective on wet ice when the temperature is near zero, but don't outperform snow tires in other winter conditions.



#### ***Tips from the experts...***

**Tires marked with the snowflake and mountain peaks meet the requirements for excellent snow traction performance. They are designed for driving in snowy conditions.**

- ❖ It's recommended you install four winter tires, even on front-wheel drive vehicles, for better traction, braking and control in slippery and snowy conditions.
- ❖ Check the condition of your tires and their air pressure regularly. A tire can lose one pound of air pressure for every five-degree drop in temperature.
- ❖ Avoid mixing tires of different tread patterns, construction types and sizes. Replace any that are damaged or have worn tread surfaces.



## Winter Maintenance



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**This is what the Ministry of Transportation does to keep our highways safe:**

- ❖ Ontario has some of the highest road maintenance standards in North America.
- ❖ It uses the latest technology, such as pre-wetted salt to enhance its effectiveness, and sensors to monitor weather and road conditions so snow removal equipment can be sent out when it's needed.
  - It uses technology to predict winter storms and proactively plan and deploy snow removal equipment.
  - Anti-icing liquid is spread on the highway before winter weather begins to help prevent snow from sticking to the highway surface. It also improves the effectiveness of plowing operations.
  - Equipment may be installed at bridges to automatically spray anti-icing liquid.
- ❖ It provides drivers with a tool to get information on current road conditions by calling 511 or going online at **ontario.ca/trip** which are both available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**This is how its provincial highways are maintained in the winter:**

- ❖ Snowplowing, sanding and salting are provided by contractors who are required to meet specific standards, specifications and performance requirements.
  - Their performance is monitored before, during and after a storm and if the contractors do not meet the standards, they face serious consequences.
- ❖ Contractors are responsible for more than 16,000 km of provincial highways.
  - They use more than 1,000 snowplows, sanders and salt trucks to fight winter storms on provincial highways.
  - Some use tow plows; a full-length trailer-mounted plow blade that is capable of clearing an additional lane when maneuvered into an adjacent lane.
- ❖ Contractors are required to:
  - Begin plowing provincial highways when there is an accumulation of 2 cm of snow or slush.
  - Begin sanding or salting within 30 minutes of the start of winter weather.
  - Monitor the winter storm and adjust operations dependant upon the intensity and duration of the weather, and the precipitation type.
  - Plow continuously and sand or salt to reduce slippery conditions during the storm and throughout the clean-up after the storm.
  - Clear through lanes first, and then begin removing snow from exit ramps, turning lanes, truck climbing and passing lanes, shoulders and medians.

**However:**

- ❖ A severe or long storm may delay the clearing of highways, even with the best efforts of road crews.
- ❖ It may take up to eight hours for plows or sanders to begin servicing ramps and low-volume highways.
- ❖ Extreme weather may result in closing the highway.



## Winter Weather



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### **When Visibility Turns Bad - Driving in Blowing Snow and Whiteouts**

#### **ALWAYS:**

- ❖ Slow down gradually and drive according to weather and road conditions.
- ❖ Make sure the full lighting system of your vehicle is turned on.
- ❖ Increase your following distance. You will need extra distance to brake safely.
- ❖ Keep looking as far ahead as possible to see any hazards that may be on the road.
- ❖ Reduce the distractions in your vehicle. Your full attention is required at all times.
- ❖ Keep your windows and mirrors clean. Use the defroster and windshield wipers to maximize your vision.
- ❖ Stay off the road when visibility and weather conditions are poor.

#### **NEVER:**

- ❖ If visibility is decreasing rapidly, do not stop on the road. Look for an opportunity to pull into a safe parking area and wait for conditions to improve.
- ❖ Attempt to pass a vehicle moving slowly or speed up to get away from a vehicle that is following too closely.

#### **REMEMBER:**

- ❖ Watch your speed. You may be going faster than you think. If you are, reduce your speed gradually.
- ❖ Leave a safe braking distance between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- ❖ Remain calm and patient.
- ❖ If you become stuck or stranded in severe weather, stay with your vehicle for warmth and safety until help arrives.
  - Slightly open a window for ventilation.
  - Run your engine sparingly.
  - Use your emergency flashers.
- ❖ Be prepared and carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle that includes items such as a flashlight, warm blankets, extra clothing, winter boots, and non-perishable energy foods. A candle and matches can generate heat and keep you warm while waiting for help if you do become stranded.

**Before you drive and during your trip, check weather forecasts and road reports regularly. If there is a weather warning or reports of poor visibility and driving conditions, delay your trip until conditions improve or postpone it if you need to.**



## Plan Ahead



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### ***Be Prepared!***

- ❖ If you are travelling a long distance, plan your route ahead of time. Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to arrive.
- ❖ Check your vehicle before your trip and carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle that includes items such as a flashlight, warm blankets, extra clothing, winter boots, and non-perishable energy foods. A candle and matches generate some heat while waiting for help if you become stranded.
- ❖ Clear all snow and ice completely off windows, side view mirrors, headlights, taillights and licence plates.
- ❖ Keep your vehicle's fuel tank full. The extra volume can help reduce moisture problems in your fuel system and it adds extra weight to your vehicle. A topped-up gas tank will also be an asset if you become stranded.
- ❖ Buckle up! Wearing a seatbelt is the most effective way to reduce your risk of injury in a motor vehicle collision.
- ❖ Make sure you are alert and well rested before you begin your trip.
- ❖ Wear comfortable clothing that doesn't restrict your movement while at the wheel. Have warm clothing with you for when you get out of your vehicle.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Road conditions are available by calling 511 or online at [ontario.ca/trip](http://ontario.ca/trip) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### ***What to Do in an Emergency***

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 911 on your cell phone will connect you with the emergency services contact centre in the area. Please use 1-888-310-1122 for non-emergencies.**

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 and make sure you are visible to other drivers.

Use your emergency flashers, flares, or a Call Police sign. Run your engine sparingly and be careful of exhaust fumes. Check to make sure the exhaust pipe is clear of drifting snow before running the engine. Slightly open a window away from the wind to have a continuous supply of fresh air.

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