



Winter Driving

CAGC INFORMATION ALERT

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With the winter season upon us, and driving as our number one risk out there, the CAGC would like to remind everyone of some safe driving principles.

STAY ALERT

Did you know that most accidents happen with only one person in the car? Why? Because the more eyes looking for things on the road, the more chance you have to avoid them. Some important factors in remaining a safe winter driver (and isn't that what we all strive to be?) are conditions – of the vehicle, of the road, and of the driver.

Vehicle - Make sure your vehicle is in good winter driving condition. The last thing you want to do when it is -40 is change a tire or worse yet be broken down on the side of the road. Make sure you have visibility by clearing the windows off before driving. Hard to see that pedestrian or animal when the windows are covered in ice.

Road - Things change quickly in the winter – one minute sunny, the next whiteout conditions. Always check the road reports before making any trip, and if it isn't necessary, don't go! Journey management is extremely important too, so always let someone know when you leave and when you arrive so that they know where to look for you if you don't show up. And if you decide to stop, call!

Driver - We all know better than to drink and drive or at least we should by now. But research has shown that driving while fatigued is almost as dangerous as driving while impaired by alcohol. Sometimes all the coffee in the world just won't help you to stay awake – so pull over and take a nap! Watch for other distractions as well – stress, cell phones, passengers, music. They all add up!

SLOW DOWN

These days we are all working at maximum capacity; we are always in a hurry. But slowing down just a few kilometers an hour in the winter can mean the difference between getting there five minutes later and not getting there at all. And don't fall into the cruise control trap – the last thing you want to do on an icy road is hit the brakes if you don't need to, and that is your first instinct when you need to turn it off. Black ice – so named because of its resemblance to the blacktop – can appear at any time. In fact, it takes pleasure in catching drivers unaware.

STAY IN CONTROL

Slowing down and staying alert are both pro-active ways to stay in control. But there are situations where control of your vehicle will be threatened, despite your best efforts.

Braking - Make sure you know how to use your vehicle's braking system on snow and ice. Check your owner's manual, and remember practice makes perfect!

Spacing - the most proactive thing you can do to avoid braking quickly is to keep proper spacing between you and the vehicle in front of you. They may have a very interesting out-of-province license plate you are dying to read, but unless you want to eat it you had best be leaving at least 4 seconds between you.

Skidding - if you do end up in a skid, you will want to regain control as soon as possible – braking is the last thing you want to do. Take your foot off the gas to slow down, even shift into neutral, then look and steer in the direction you want to go.

PROACTIVE DRIVING TIPS

Here are some other useful tips that will help keep you safe on the road:

- Get in the habit of moving your eyes every few seconds, and don't forget the rear-view! You may not be able to control what happens behind you, but you will know whether the guy behind is paying attention or thinking about his first beer down at the pub;
- Always wear a seatbelt;
- Never drink and drive;
- Carry appropriate emergency supplies (first aid kit, fire extinguisher, candles, matches, warm clothes & footwear, blanket, food, flares/triangles, shovel, tow rope, booster cables, flashlight/batteries,) - Alcohol is not a good idea as an emergency supply because it can give you a false sense of warmth;
- Look twice before entering an intersection;
- Always use your signal lights;
- Always have your lights on, especially on the highway;
- Get a good night's sleep before driving

Drive safely, see you in the spring!