Winter Driving Safety

Wintertime in California can mean fog, rain, ice, snow, longer hours of darkness, slippery roads, and poor visibility. Driving during this season can be challenging, especially if a part of your job; it’s important to exercise prevention, caution, and care.

- **Be prepared.** Before you get into a vehicle, take a little extra time to make sure everything in and about the vehicle is in good condition and operating correctly.
  - Are the windshield, side windows, and headlights clean and clear enough to see properly? Good visibility is essential to safe driving.
  - Do the windshield wipers work? Are the blades in good condition? Is there plenty of windshield washer fluid?
  - Does the defroster work?
  - Can you see in all the mirrors?
  - Do the tail, brake, and emergency lights work?
  - Do the tires have good tread and adequate pressure?
  - Are the brakes working properly?
  - Is there more than a quarter-tank of gas?
  - Do you have emergency or repair equipment in the vehicle, including flashlights, flares, fire extinguishers, and chains where applicable?

- **Take your time.** Rushing in difficult driving conditions can lead to an accident. Get an updated road report and weather forecast before you leave. Allow enough time to get to your destination.

- **Ride the storm out.** Strong winds in combination with heavy rain or snow can make it impossible to see where you are driving. Under these conditions, it is usually safest to wait out bad weather.

- **Obey road rules.** Drive appropriately for the road conditions. The posted speed limit may be too fast under winter conditions. Driving on wet roads can cause hydroplaning as a thin barrier of water builds up between your tires and the road surface, causing your vehicle to slip. If you begin to lose control of your steering, take your foot off the gas. Remember also to reduce driving speed on muddy, oily, or icy roads.

- **Keep your cool.** Sometimes drivers get frustrated with slow-moving traffic. Don’t lose your temper and let other drivers aggravate you. Maintain a safe speed and drive defensively.

- **No pushin’ the cushion.** Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and other vehicles. The California Highway Patrol recommends a three-second cushion on dry roads and in ideal conditions, but in winter you should extend it to four seconds.

Winter driving hazards are inevitable, but preventive maintenance and extra caution can be important factors in accident prevention. Take your time and plan ahead. It will make your driving experience easier and safer.

For more helpful tips, visit “[Drive Safely](#)”