

Slippery When Wet ? Holiday weather made for unsafe road conditions

By Michelle Janzen

Shelburne motorists are no strangers to bad road conditions, and this holiday season the weather made for some slick and messy driving conditions.

With the snow and ice pushing our driving skills to the limit, the safest thing to do is to avoid driving in bad weather conditions altogether. However, if you must drive, give yourself lots of extra time for travel and always tell someone where you are going, the route you are taking and when you expect to arrive.

Here are some tips that may help you with more snow predicted in the area this week.

Make sure you have enough fuel. Try to maintain at least half of a tank at all times.

Always maintain a safe following distance between you and other cars. The posted speed limit is the maximum speed you can go under ideal conditions. In the winter, you need to drop your speed to match the road conditions. No matter how experienced you are, the snow and ice is always has an element of unpredictability.

Watch for black ice when approaching bridges and overpasses as these sections of road freeze sooner than others in cold weather. This thin, almost invisible coating of ice can cause you to suddenly lose control when taking a corner or breaking.

Avoid sudden moves. Accelerate gently to avoid spinning your wheels. Turn slowly and apply brakes gently and slowly when stopping, never brake suddenly. Anticipate turns, stops and lane changes well before they occur. Quick movements could put you into a spin.

See and be seen. It is imperative for drivers to be seen in low light conditions and when blowing snow impairs visibility. Always drive with your headlights on, and if the weather is really bad, four way blinkers should also be turned on.

If you do get trapped in a storm or a snow bank stay with your vehicle. Most deaths occur when people get out of their cars putting themselves at risk of being hit by other drivers, getting lost and freezing to death.

If it is safe to do so, attach a red flag to your radio antenna and set out flares if possible. Make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow and debris to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. You should open one window partially to let fresh air in and only run your vehicle for about ten minutes every hour to charge the battery and warm the interior.

Stay calm and don't panic. If you don't arrive on time those who are expecting you, will know where to search for you.