

Traffic safety tip: safe winter driving practices

Ontario's winter weather can be very challenging at times, often exposing drivers to a wide range of weather and road conditions that can change drastically in a matter of hours. And as a driver, it's best to be prepared for whatever Mother Nature throws your way!

Get your vehicle winter-ready with a maintenance inspection to make sure your vehicle is in safe operating condition. One of the best investments you can make to prepare your vehicle for winter driving is to install four winter tires. While all-season tires may be adequate in some areas of the province, they are not made for driving in snowbelt regions and throughout the north. Winter tires will improve driving safety by providing better traction and handling through snow, slush and ice. They will also provide greater stability and control of your vehicle and will help to reduce stopping distances in slippery driving conditions.

Before you hit the road, check weather and travel conditions and don't take chances if the weather is bad. Call 5-1-1 for information about current road conditions or go online at ontario.ca/trip. This service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and road conditions are normally updated five times daily and more often as highway closures occur or as conditions change.

Look far ahead when you drive so you can recognize hazards in advance and have plenty of time to respond. Adjust your driving to current weather and road conditions and reduce your speed when the roads are slippery or slushy. Remember that bridges and overpasses freeze more quickly and stay frozen longer and black ice on the road can cause your vehicle to suddenly lose control.

It's best to carry a winter survival kit with you when you travel. Extra clothing, winter boots, blankets and granola or chocolate bars are also recommended, and a candle and waterproof matches can help heat the interior of your vehicle if it stalls or you become stranded.

If winter driving conditions make you nervous, uncomfortable or fearful when you're behind the wheel, stay off the road unless your trip is absolutely necessary.