

OPP to drivers: help prevent another chaotic winter on the roads

The more than 33,000 road collisions on OPP patrolled roads last winter has the OPP asking road users to be part of the solution to reduce the number of preventable collisions over the 2014-2015 winter.

Poor driving behaviour, not poor weather or road conditions, was a primary contributing factor in many of last winter's single and multi-vehicle crashes, taking an unrelenting toll on road users, the movement of traffic and the provincial social costs associated with motor vehicle collisions.

Between December 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014 a total of 33,334 collisions occurred on OPP-patrolled roads compared to 25,953 collisions over the same four-month period in 2012-2013. The crashes resulted in deaths and numerous serious injuries. Among the injured were OPP officers who responded to these crash scenes and whose cruisers were struck by drivers who failed to adjust their speed to the conditions.

The OPP will be working closely with the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) to ensure that roads are kept as safe as possible over the winter months, but the OPP admits that they cannot do this alone.

No other road safety partner can have as strong an influence on reducing the number of collisions during winter as drivers can through positive driving behaviour. During the winter months, the way people drive needs to be very different than the way they drive the rest of year. If every driver makes this critical change this winter, we will not have another chaotic winter that ends with a staggering number of collisions and the associated injuries and deaths," said OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair, Provincial Commander of Traffic Safety and Operational Support.

The safety of our roads is always a top priority and we continue to work closely with our road safety partners to promote safe and responsible winter practices. Ontario winters can be challenging for drivers. Be sure to check road conditions on MTO's Ontario 511 Traveller Information Services. Please stay alert, slow down and drive according to road and weather conditions," said Steven Del Duca, Minister of Transportation

Over the winter months, the OPP will be providing a steady flow of safety-related tips, information and reminders on its social media sites in an effort to keep motorists on track with safe driving behaviour and to keep them informed about winter driving issues on our roads. One strong and recurring message people can expect to hear over winter is the need for every driver to adjust their speed and slow right down when visibility and road conditions deteriorate and to avoid non-essential travel during these periods.

Another important message will be the need for all drivers to use their full set of headlights every day throughout the winter months. Far too many vehicles could not be seen by the drivers behind them last winter because their rear lights were not on. Using the full set of headlights is the only way to completely engage your rear lights and this is critical in helping to reduce the risk of collisions when driving in poor visibility.

The OPP will also be encouraging drivers to use MTO's Ontario 511 Traveller Information Services which provides easy access to up-to-date winter information on road conditions and road closures on provincially maintained roads. Ontario 511 also provides voice-activated, hands-free service. Drivers are expected to observe Ontario cell phone laws when using Ontario 511 while on the road and are encouraged to pull over to a safe location to use it as the safest option. Planning ahead and being prepared will help keep road users safe so help spread the word about Ontario 511!

Because drivers and passengers have many eyes on the road, they are in the favourable position of exerting an even stronger influence on reducing the number of collisions if they too take part in the OPP's social media dialogue on safe winter driving.

The OPP is asking road users to tell them what driving behaviours they believe Ontario drivers need to change in order to help prevent another chaotic winter on our roads. Go to the OPP's Corporate Facebook page and share your views, observations and be part of the solution for a safer winter on our roads: <https://www.facebook.com/ontarioprovincialpolice?ref=bookmarks>

While the OPP, the MTO and drivers all play different roles in keeping winter roads safe, the goal is the same for all: safe drivers and safe winter roads that are free of collisions, injuries and deaths.