

Winter Safety Starts with Sensible Choices

North Dakota winters, with blowing and compacted snow, freezing drizzle, black ice, and extreme wind, can be challenging for even the most experienced drivers. The first priority for driving in winter, and throughout the year, is to **drive safely**. In North Dakota, 17% of all vehicle crashes occur in winter weather conditions. Quickly deteriorating road and driving conditions can make travel hazardous, or even deadly. Before going out on the road, whatever the distance, determine if the trip is necessary. If so, review these tips to get to your destination safely!

Before You Go: Plan your travel route and let someone know your plans and what time you leave. Give yourself extra time and know the weather and road conditions between where you are and where you're going, before you start your trip.

Check conditions: travel.dot.nd.gov, text **511**, or download the ND Roads app.

Winter Driving Tips

- Slow down – observe speed limits AND drive for the road conditions.
- Be aware of changing road conditions.
- Increase following distance – 8 to 10 seconds is a good rule to follow.
- Do NOT use cruise control on compacted snow or in icy conditions.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly.
- Control steering – if you're skidding, steer in the direction of the skid and do not overcorrect.
- ABS brakes – apply firm steady pressure on brake pedal.
- Turn your lights on – especially during snowy blizzard conditions.
- Always buckle up – buckle up in the front and back, make sure children are correctly restrained.
- Always drive sober.
- Focus on driving and don't be distracted - do not text and drive.
- **Never travel on closed roads – it is against the law to go around road closure gates.**
- Don't use GPS to find another route – if roads are closed due to weather conditions, secondary roads are not cleared and traveling on them is extremely hazardous.
- Don't CROWD the plow – snow plows travel slowly, make wide turns, stop often, overlap lanes, and exit the road frequently. The road behind an active snow plow is safer for driving. If you are behind a snowplow, stay behind it or use caution when passing, especially in a "snow fog".
- If you're stalled, stay with your vehicle – DO NOT walk for help, it is safer to stay with your vehicle. Call 911 and wait for help. Clear the exhaust pipe of any snow and run it only sporadically – just long enough to stay warm.
- Don't pull onto the shoulder unless it's an emergency – try to get to a SAFE location off the roadway to wait out the storm.

Get your Vehicle Winter-Ready

- Tires are in good condition (properly inflated with good tread).
- Exhaust system is leak-free.
- Interior and exterior lights are working properly.
- Windshield wipers function properly, and blades are in good working condition.
- Heater and defroster are working.
- Battery is good and can hold a charge, check to make sure there are jumper cables in the vehicle.

Before you leave

- Start your trip with a full fuel tank and stop to fill up along the way to make sure you have enough fuel if you become stalled or stranded.
- Remove snow and/or ice from windshield, mirrors, windows, and lights.
- Double check to make sure your emergency preparedness kit is packed.

Emergency Preparedness Kit

- Cell phone charger
- Shovel
- Booster cables
- First aid kit
- Roll of toilet paper
- Disposable handwarmer packs
- Tow strap
- Nylon rope
- Bagged kitty litter or sand to help with traction
- Ice scraper/snowbrush
- Flashlight and fresh batteries
- Sleeping bag or blankets
- Books or puzzles to help stay awake if you're stalled for an extended period of time
- Extra clothing (sweatshirt, socks, gloves, hat, heavy coat, boots)
- Multi-wick candles, matches and/or lighter
- Bottled water and nonperishable snacks
- Bright cloth (red or orange) or safety flag or vest