



Rand McNally's Top 10 Tips for Driving in Winter Weather

Advanced planning and patience are the keys to traveling winter roads safely

CHICAGO, Dec. 12, 2018 – As temperatures drop and roads get slippery with ice and snow, even the most experienced of drivers can face challenges. According to the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#), there are over 1.2 million weather-related vehicle crashes across the U.S. each year, with 18% of them occurring due to adverse winter conditions. This year, Rand McNally's road trip experts have compiled a list of tips to help keep drivers safe and road-ready.

1. Know the meaning of different [winter weather alerts](#) issued by the National Weather Service (NWS). Make sure you know the difference among the various alerts before you hit the road:
 - a. **Winter Storm Warning:** This warning is issued when a significant winter weather event occurs, including snow, ice, sleet or blowing snow. The NWS advises against traveling; if you must drive, bring a winter survival kit (see point No. 5) in your vehicle.
 - b. **Winter Storm Watch:** This alert means that severe winter conditions may be in effect and could make travel treacherous. You can expect heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice, blowing snow, and poor visibility.
 - c. **Winter Weather Advisory:** The advisory is announced when wintry conditions are expected, but conditions are not as hazardous as the warnings or watches. Be alert and careful on the road at all times.
2. Slow down and proceed with caution. If the roads are icy, it can take longer to brake, so make sure you are going at a speed that allows you to maintain traction and avoid skidding. Also, be sure to give yourself plenty of time to stop at intersections. Allow for three to twelve times more stopping distance than in normal dry conditions, depending upon the size of your vehicle.
3. Pull over if it's too difficult to safely drive, such as in whiteout conditions, or if you've had an accident. If you unexpectedly find yourself unable to drive, try to pull over and park your car out of harm's way. Do not leave your vehicle, sit tight, and wait for help or until the dangerous conditions have passed. You can safely run the heat in your car for 10 minutes every hour to help warm up and keep the battery charged, but ensure that your exhaust pipe is free of snow to avoid any harmful carbon monoxide incidents.

4. Before heading out, be sure to tell a friend or family member your travel schedule and route. This is especially important if you are driving in rural areas or on lightly-traveled roads.
5. Make sure your car is stocked with the proper gear to handle winter driving-related tasks, as well as emergency supplies. The [National Safety Council](#) recommends that you have certain items on hand, such as a small shovel; jumper cables; a bag of kitty litter to create traction if you happen to get stuck; a flashlight; a small tool kit; an ice scraper; a first aid kit; matches; blankets; non-perishable, high-energy foods like dried fruits, and water.
6. Regularly check your windshield to ensure that the washer reservoir is full – and stash an extra bottle of fluid in your trunk. Be sure to buy fluid with extra alcohol or de-icer, to ensure that it works at lower temperatures.
7. Keep your gas tank full. Cold temperatures can cause condensation to form on the walls of a low fuel tank; the water may then find its way into the fuel lines, freezing and blocking the flow of fuel to the engine. If this happens, you could find yourself stuck and racking up some pricey repair costs.
8. Check your tire pressure before you leave. When outdoor temperatures drop, so does inflation pressure. Lower pressure can close up the tread and decrease traction, which can increase the likelihood of skidding on snow and ice and getting into an accident. The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA) recommends checking your tires at least once a month and before long road trips – it only takes a few minutes and you'll be glad you did. Many cars provide low tire pressure warnings; if you receive such a warning, stop as soon as possible to check your tire pressure.
9. Remember, safety first. Always wear your seatbelt, and make sure that all other passengers in the car are buckled up in the appropriate way based on their age and size. According to the [NHTSA](#), car crashes are a leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 13 – so make sure that kids are in the right car seat and that it's installed correctly.
10. Keep your cell phone charged and keep a spare charger in the car. If something happens, you'll want to make sure that you have a way to reach someone, including emergency responders if cell service is available.

Severe weather can be challenging for drivers, but it's manageable if you prepare in advance. That way, you'll be ready for anything that Mother Nature throws your way.

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