

Staying safe in a winter storm

When a severe winter storm is headed your way, drive only if it is absolutely necessary. Finding yourself trapped and unprepared in a snowbound vehicle can turn quickly into a frigid, hungry, thirsty nightmare.

Weather forecasting makes it unlikely that blizzards will arrive without warning — so long as attention is paid to the forecasts. Even so, it's important to know how to deal with situations that are not only uncomfortable but potentially life threatening.

If you must drive, try to do so only during the day, with a companion if possible. Keep others informed of your route and schedule, stay on main roads and avoid back road shortcuts.

A winter emergency kit can be crucial and should be tailored to the environment you find yourself in. In an area with cold temperatures and lots of snow, you should have a good sleeping bag and/or blankets, a shovel, sand or kitty litter, extra warm clothes, food, water (or a way to melt snow), metal container (to melt snow), candles, matches, winter hat, gloves, boots, portable cellphone battery pack, flashlight and some sort of signal light.

A hard-walled cooler to store food and water supplies is nearly ideal. A hard plastic, durable storage tub can be used for the rest of your supplies. These should have a tight-sealing lid so if they are removed from the vehicle, nothing inside will get wet.



When you head out, make sure you have a full tank of fuel. The more you have the better, in case you become stranded. It will help you stay warm, ensure your fuel lines do not freeze, keep your battery charged and provide enough fuel to depart after the storm.

For many people who become stranded, an immediate decision is likely to be whether to 'stay or go.'

It is advisable to stay in your vehicle if rescue is likely, there is no safe location nearby, you do not have appropriate clothing to go outside and you do not have the ability to call for help.

It can be safe to leave the vehicle if the distance to call for help is accessible, there is good visibility, outside conditions are not hazardous and you have appropriate clothing.

Here are some more roadside survival tips:

- Immediately ensure that the exhaust pipe is clear of snow so you don't get carbon monoxide buildup in the vehicle.
- Turn on your hazard lights or place roadside flares near your vehicle to alert other drivers and/or potential rescuers that you are there.
- Turn the engine off. Turn it on every hour for about 10 minutes to heat the vehicle up, and then turn it back off to conserve fuel.
- Continue to check the tailpipe each time you turn the heater on.
- Stay hydrated. The more hydrated you are, the warmer you will be. Eat regularly and drink ample fluids, but avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Keep heat inside your body. Clothing and blankets do not provide heat or warmth but they do preserve or help trap the heat your body generates. Huddle with passengers.
- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion.
- Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electrical energy needs — the use of lights, heat and radio — with supply.
- Turn on the inside light at night so work crews or rescuers can see you.

Snow Storm Safety

The Quiz

These questions are meant to help you remember what was discussed today — not to test your patience or challenge your intelligence. The answers are at the bottom of the page. Cover them up, and complete the quiz as quickly as you can.

- 1 Paying attention to weather forecasts helps make winter driving safer.
True False
- 2 Is driving on back roads safer than on highways during a snowstorm?
Yes No
- 3 Which of these are items to include in a vehicle emergency kit?
A. Sleeping bag or blankets.
B Winter hat, gloves and boots.
C. Metal container to melt snow.
D. Shovel and sand or kitty litter.
E. All of the above.
- 4 It's advisable to keep your fuel tank as full as possible when driving in a snowstorm.
True False
- 5 Which of these conditions should exist if you choose to leave your vehicle if you are stranded by a winter storm?
A The distance to call for help is accessible C. You have appropriate clothing.
B. There is good visibility. D. All of the above.
- 6 Keeping a stranded vehicle's exhaust pipe free of ice and snow will prevent buildup of carbon monoxide.
True False
- 7 Which of these should be done if you are stranded by snowstorm?
A. Turn the vehicle engine off, then on every once an hour. C. Drink coffee or alcohol to stay hydrated.
B. Turn on your hazard lights. D. Be careful not to waste battery power.
- 8 Do you have a well-stocked emergency kit in your vehicle?
Yes No Don't Know

ANSWERS: 1. True, 2. No, 3. E., 4. True, 5. D., 6. True, 7. A., B. and D., 8. Your



Hold These Thoughts

If outside conditions are safe and you've been stuck for awhile, you might decide to try and get your vehicle out.

Start by removing snow from the roof and work your way down. While you're doing this, run the engine and defrost to start melting any ice on your windshield and windows.

Next, take a shovel and remove as much snow as possible around the tires and the sides of your vehicle.

Try to dig a path in the direction you want your vehicle to go.

Scrape your windshields last. If you don't have a traditional scraper, use a credit card or CD case to help remove ice that hasn't already thawed.

If you don't have an ice scraper with a brush to remove the snow from your car, use the branch of an evergreen tree or a newspaper (whatever you can find).

If you don't have a shovel, use what's available to you, such as a hubcap or a Frisbee in the trunk. To get your car unstuck, turn your wheels side to side a couple of times to push any remaining snow out of the way. If you have all-wheel or 4-wheel drive, make sure it's engaged. Shift into forward (or the lowest gear possible on a standard), gently press the gas and ease forward. Then shift into reverse and gently press the gas to rock backward. Repeat this process until you get enough traction to pull out and keep going.

If your tires start spinning, let up on the gas immediately because you'll only dig yourself in deeper by spinning the tires.

Have a passenger stand outside the vehicle, hold onto the inside of the driver's window and help push.

Never let anyone stand behind the vehicle and push because the car could slide back and cause serious injury.

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Safety Meeting For the Record



Date of Meeting: _____

Topic: _____

Location: _____

Department: _____

Start Time: _____ Finish Time: _____

Meeting Leader: _____

In Attendance:

Tips for Safety Meeting Leaders

Prevent employee gripe sessions. Establish ground rules for your safety meeting right from the beginning. First, an employee who presents a problem should offer a solution. This will facilitate reasonable objectives. Second, discussions that head off on a tangent should be kept to a minimum. Use a timer if necessary. Third, have everyone agree to stay on the subject of safety. This is not the forum to discuss schedules, vacation, salaries, etc.

Review your progress. If time allows at this meeting (schedule a special one if necessary) review issues and suggestions raised

previously and detail any policy or practice changes that have been instituted as a result. It is important for employees to see proof of progress in order to believe they can make a difference. If there has been no progress on an issue, don't try to hide it. Your employees are probably already aware of what hasn't been addressed. Instead, commit to a time when the matter will be addressed and resolved, and follow through on that commitment.

Get the most out of your safety meetings by keeping the format consistent and the content meaningful.

Note: TalksZone safety meetings are not intended to take the place of your own safety procedures. Always consult and/or review your procedures before attempting any work.