

Are You Prepared for Winter?



Winter Car Care Tips

The North Dakota Department of Transportation maintains over 3,000 vehicles during the winter, and has some tips on how you can keep your vehicle winter ready:

Batteries are much weaker in cold weather, so keep your vehicle's battery fully charged.

Tires should have M+S or All Season tread and be in good condition.

Brakes should be checked and serviced if necessary. Even braking on all four wheels will lessen the chance of skids on slippery roads.

Make sure your vehicle's exhaust system has no leaks. Carbon monoxide is a silent killer and can accumulate quickly in closed vehicles.

Make sure your wiper blades are in good condition. Keep the windshield washer reservoir filled with antifreeze solvent.

Check the radiator, heater core and all hoses that carry anti-freeze solution to see that they are in good condition and free of leaks. Also check to see that the solution is good to at least 40 below zero.

Make sure you have winter weight oil (usually 5W-30) in the engine.

Emergencies can happen when you least expect them, so be sure to carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle.



Winter Survival Kit

Several blankets and warm clothing, such as parka, boots, long underwear, heavy socks, mittens, ski mask.

A source of heat, such as a multiple wick candle can heater. It is best to also have matches to light your candle, because some lighters won't work in extreme cold.

Water and a metal container suitable for melting ice or snow to be used for drinking water.

A radio and flashlight with extra batteries.

Food, such as hard candy, jellybeans, raisins, nuts, candy bars, dehydrated fruit, and jerky.

Something to read to help keep you awake.

A folding cup.

Toilet tissue.

Bright red or orange cloth and whistle to signal help.

Nylon rope.



Winter Travel Tips

General Information:

Carry a cell phone.

Let someone know when you depart, your route, and expected arrival time.

Dress according to weather conditions. Keep dry and wear clothing in layers.
Do not leave without a full fuel tank.

If Stranded:

Stay with your vehicle.

Run the engine sparingly. Start with 15 minutes every hour and adjust if needed.

Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow.

If the cold is extreme, it may be necessary to keep the engine running continuously. It may not restart if shut off.

Keep your feet off the floor if the heater is not on.

Never go to sleep with the engine running.

Read to pass the time.

Position car so it faces into the wind.

Tie a colorful banner on the car antenna. If you need to leave the car for any distance during the storm, tie a nylon rope to the car and yourself so you will be able to find your way back to the car.

Move all your emergency supplies from the trunk to the interior of the car as soon as you realize you will be staying for a while. Put on warm clothing now, before you get cold. It is easier to stay warm than it is to regain lost warmth. Loosen tight clothing so body heat can circulate. Remove metal jewelry as it can chill you.

Check your supplies to see what you have to work with and arrange them in order for their use. This will help you ration them in case you are stranded for a long period of time.

Here's a tip from cold weather campers: eat a snack of high calorie food just before sleeping to stimulate your metabolism (heat production). If you awaken due to the cold, eat some more high energy food and add another layer of insulation such as more clothing or a blanket.

Vehicle Equipment:

Carry repair tools such as pliers, wrenches, screw drivers, pocket knife.

Carry tire chains, booster cables, tow rope, gas line antifreeze, and container of sand.



Winter Safe Driving Tips

NDDOT snowplow operators work hard for the safety of the traveling public, however, changing weather conditions could quickly alter road conditions and drivers need to pay special attention to ensure safe travel. To ensure that you arrive at your destination safely, it's a good idea for motorists to follow some basic safety tips while behind the wheel:

“Know Before You Go” by checking road conditions BEFORE you travel. Check the Travel Information Map or call 511.

Turn on your lights. This will increase your visibility to other motorists and snowplow operators. Brush snow from your car that could cover your tail lights.

Slow down and drive according to the conditions. Most winter crashes are caused by driving too fast for conditions. Snowplows typically move at slower speeds.

Never drive through “white-outs” or “snow fog” caused by cross winds or plowing snow. Wait until you can see.

Stay back at least five car lengths behind the plow, far from the snow fog and any sanding material being spread; snowplow operators will turn off the sander, pull over, or raise the plow for better visibility when it is safe to do so to allow traffic to pass.

Be patient. Allow more time to get to your destination. Remember snowplows are working to improve road conditions for your trip.

Know where the plow is on multi-lane roadways. The plow could be in either lane or on the shoulder.

Be extremely cautious when passing a snowplow. They can be moved sideways by drifts and hard snow pack.

Watch for plow trucks on interstate ramps and “authorized vehicle only” cross-overs.

Don't assume that you'll have good traction because the road looks sanded. The sand can sink into the snow pack, leaving a slick surface.

Never use cruise control on wet or icy roadways.