

## WINTER DRIVING TIPS FOR THE NORTH CAROLINA HIGH COUNTRY



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We've all seen Winter Safe Driving tips over the years. This condensed list is from the North Carolina Safety Council and provides excellent guidance. I hope you think so too and share them with your family, friends, employees or others you care about.

### Winter Driving Safety Tips

#### **How should you prepare yourself for winter driving?**

- Plan your driving in advance.
- Avoid driving when fatigued.
- Contact your county "Road Reports" to get updates regarding road conditions in the region to which you are going.
- Check weather conditions for your travel route (and time) before you begin driving.
- Plan your arrival time at a destination by taking into account any delays due to slower traffic, reduced visibility, roadblocks, abandoned automobiles, collisions, etc.
- Inform someone of your route and planned arrival time.
- Choose warm and comfortable clothing. If you need to remove outdoor clothing later while driving, **STOP** the vehicle in a safe spot.
- Warm up your vehicle **BEFORE** driving off. It reduces moisture condensing on the inside of the windows.
- **NEVER** warm up your vehicle in a closed garage.
- Remove snow and ice from your vehicle. It helps to see and, equally important, to be seen.
- Wear sunglasses on bright sunny days.
- Bring a cell phone if you have one but do not leave it in the car as the battery will freeze.

## How should you drive in winter weather?

- **Buckle up** before you start driving. Keep your seat belt buckled at all times.
- **SLOW DOWN!** - Posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds is the best precautionary measure against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. “Black ice” is invisible.
- **Be aware of the road conditions.** Black ice will make a road look like shiny new asphalt. Pavement should look grey-white in winter.
- **Do not use cruise control.** Winter driving requires you to be in full control at all times.
- Reduce your speed while approaching intersections covered with ice or snow.
- Allow for extra travelling time or even consider delaying a trip if the weather is inclement.
- Drive with low-beam headlights on. Not only are they brighter than daytime running lights but turning them on also activates the tail lights. This makes your vehicle more visible.
- **Lengthen your following distance** behind the vehicle ahead of you. Stopping distance on an icy road can be up to 10 times that of stopping on a dry one. For example, from around 175 ft at the speed of 50 mph, to over 1,750 ft on an icy road surface. (Even if it’s half that there’s a huge difference!)
- Stay in the right-hand lane except when passing and use turn signals when changing lanes.
- Steer with smooth and precise movements. Changing lanes too quickly and jerky steering while braking or accelerating can cause skidding.
- Be aware and slow down when you see a sign warning that you are approaching a bridge. Steel and concrete bridges are likely to be icy even when there is no ice on the asphalt surface, (because bridges over open air cool down faster than roads which tend to be insulated somewhat by solid ground.)
- Consider getting off the road before getting stranded if the weather is worsening.
- Be patient and pass other cars only when it is safe to do so.

Please remember.....The North Carolina High Country has a unique Western Canadian Climate which we all love! In the winter we need to think like our northern friends and adjust accordingly. Although our roads are regularly plowed during the winter months they can be snow covered through much of the winter due to the frequency of snow storms and the fact that road salt is ineffective below 20 degrees. To adequately enjoy The North Carolina High Country during the winter you will need a four wheel or all wheel drive vehicle. Although front wheel drive vehicles are adequate under less severe conditions, rear wheel drive vehicles should be avoided during winter months. Whether your vehicle is four wheel drive or not, it should be equipped with tires appropriate for winter conditions. “All Season” tires are something of a misnomer, as they are developed primarily for parts of the country with marginal winters, where the infrequency of snow does not justify the expense of separate winter tires. The North Carolina High Country, despite its geographic location in the southeast, does not have a marginal winter and from October to May it is appropriate to have winter tires installed on your vehicle.

If in doubt, look for the “Mountain Snowflake” symbol on the sidewall of your tires:



Did we miss anything? Please comment with your tips and thoughts for improving driver safety during these winter months. Thanks!

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