

Driving in extreme weather



Before you go:

- Know your car's safety features (www.mycardoeswhat.org), such as antilock brakes and electronic stability control, and prepare for how to respond in a skid (bit.ly/3nVUyil). Don't assume that four-wheel or all-wheel-drive vehicles will handle better on ice.
- Make sure tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread (bit.ly/3BPf0vt). If necessary, install all-weather or snow tires.
- Make sure snow chains are in good repair.
- Test battery.
- Top up anti-freeze and winterized windshield fluid. Replace worn wiper blades.
- Keep your tank at least half full.
- Stock your car's emergency supply kit.
- Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area, such as a garage, to avoid the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Adequately clear windshield of snow and ice.
- Know your route, including fuel stops and chain-up areas. Share it with others.
- Check weather and road conditions (bit.ly/3o1j6H8). Monitor safety advisories.
- If in doubt, stay home.

Behind the wheel:

- Increase following distance. (*Rule of thumb: Add one second for each additional road hazard, such as heavy rain, ice or snow, low visibility, or slow-moving vehicles.*)
- Take extra care when rain starts, as oils can make the road slicker.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Minimize braking by using lower gears for better control.
- Avoid unnecessary stops, especially going uphill.
- Never use cruise control when roads are wet or icy.
- Turn on low beams to improve visibility. (High beams can cause glare and decrease visibility.)
- If your vehicle skids (bit.ly/3nVUyil) or hydroplanes (bit.ly/3bKoYi2), ease off the gas and avoid hard braking. Steer gently in the direction of the skid; stay focused on where you want to go.
- Don't drive (or walk) through flood waters. Twelve inches of moving water can sweep away your vehicle; six inches can knock you off your feet. Remember: "Turn around. Don't drown."
- Use caution when approaching bridges or shaded areas, which are more prone to freezing.
- If snow chains are required, pick a safe pull-out area. Use flares or reflective triangles and reflective vest for visibility.



In an emergency:

- Find a safe place to pull over. Avoid the shoulder of the road or pull as far away from traffic as possible. Turn on hazard lights.
- Stay with your vehicle. To alert responders, tie a bright cloth to the antenna, raise hood (if feasible), and turn on interior lights (when engine is running).
- If you're stranded in winter weather (bit.ly/3wkIkny), clear exhaust pipe of snow and ice to reduce risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Run heater for short periods only.
- If you're trapped in flood water (ready.gov/floods) that is rising inside the car, immediately remove your seatbelt, roll down the window, and exit the vehicle as quickly as possible, pushing children out first. Hang on to the roof of the car and call for help.

Emergency kit for car:

- High-visibility vest
- Traffic cones or triangles
- Flares
- Bottled water and food
- Headlamp or flashlight with extra batteries
- Jumper cables or jump starter
- Ice scraper
- Blanket or sleeping bag
- Maps
- Lighter
- Pen and paper
- First-aid kit, including prescriptions
- Chains, snow tires, or traction devices (weather dependent)
- Warm clothes and outerwear, including hat and gloves; sturdy shoes/boots
- Cell phone charger