



News Release

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AAA ASKS, ARE YOU READY FOR WINTER DRIVING?

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va., (January 3, 2012) – Nearly one-quarter of weather related vehicle crashes occur on snowy, slushy or icy pavement, resulting in more than 1,300 deaths and 116,800 people injured annually, according to data from the Federal Highway Administration. With AccuWeather's winter forecast calling for above-normal snowfall in some parts of the country and dropping temperatures arriving in Hampton Roads, AAA recommends motorists brush up on winter driving techniques before the weather outside turns frightful.

Prepare Your Vehicle for Use in Ice and Snow

Before winter conditions hit, it's important to prepare your car for harsh winter weather. [AAA's Winter Car Care Checklist](#) can help determine a vehicle's winter maintenance needs. Many of the items on the list can be inspected by a car owner in less than an hour, but others should be performed by a certified auto technician. AAA Car Care Centers can help with an overall winter maintenance check up.

Drive Distraction Free

It is also important when driving in winter conditions to drive distraction-free and in the right frame of mind. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that looking away from the road for just two seconds doubles your risk of being in a crash. AAA recommends if you are with a passenger, enlist the passenger's help to carry out activities that would otherwise distract you from driving safely.

Do Not Use Cruise Control and Avoid Tailgating

Normal following distances of 3 to 4 seconds for dry pavement should be increased to eight to 10 seconds when driving on icy, slippery surfaces. This extra time will allow for extra braking distance should a sudden stop become necessary. If driving on a four-lane highway, stay in the clearest lane; avoid changing lanes and driving over built-up snow. Do not use cruise control when driving on any slippery (wet, ice, snow, sand) surface; not using cruise control will allow you to respond instantly when you lift your foot off the accelerator.

Know When to Brake and When to Steer

Some driving situations require abrupt action to avoid a crash or collision and in winter conditions the decision to steer or brake can have very different outcomes. When travelling over 25 MPH, AAA recommends steering over braking to avoid a collision in wintry conditions, as less distance is required to steer around an object than to brake to a stop. In slick conditions, sudden braking can lead to loss of vehicle control.

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However, sometimes steering is not an option. Braking on slippery surfaces requires you to look further head and increased following and stopping distances. Plan stopping distances as early as possible and always look 20-30 seconds ahead of your vehicle to ensure you have time and space to stop safely. Shaded spots, bridges, overpasses and intersections are areas where ice is likely to form first and will be the most slippery. It is important to adjust your braking habits as road conditions change.

Stay in Control Through a Skid

Even careful drivers can experience skids. When a vehicle begins to skid, it's important to not panic and follow these basic steps:

- Continue to look and steer in the direction the car needs to go.
- Avoid slamming on the brakes as this will further upset the vehicle's balance and make it harder to control.

If you find your vehicle stuck in the snow, AAA members needing assistance can request roadside rescue at (800) AAA-HELP. Android and iPhone users can download AAA Mobile, AAA's mobile smartphone app that provides AAA services for all motorists, such as mapping and gas price comparison, as well as member-exclusive benefits including roadside assistance and discounts. AAA Membership is not required to download and use AAA apps, but is necessary to take advantage of unique member benefits such as roadside assistance. For more information on AAA Mobile, visit AAA.com/Mobile. These tips and additional information on driving in winter conditions can be found in the AAA brochure [How to Go on Ice and Snow](#) online.

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