

Winter Driving Tips for North Dakota

There are no secrets when it comes to winter driving. If there's ice on the road, it's dangerous. Someone passing at 55 mph when everyone else is crawling along at 15 or 20 mph doesn't have the inside track on the winter roadways. You're likely to see him/her in the median a few miles up the road.

If you're driving on ice, you won't know it until you need to stop or turn. It doesn't matter if you're in a sedan, a 4-wheel drive vehicle or a big rig: brakes are the great equalizer.

Ice on your windshield means ice on the road

Ice doesn't have to be packed up on the roadway to be dangerous – a thin sheet of ice can develop quickly into a thick problem.

Keep an eye on the temperature

Water freezes at 32 degrees. The roadways tend to be slightly warmer than the air temp, but once you're down that low in temperature, you need to be wary.

Look for spray coming up from other vehicles

If spray is coming off the tires, it's likely the roads are wet (as opposed to ice covered), but keep in mind that a short stretch of road with ice on it can be just as dangerous as an ice-packed roadway.

Talk to people

If you're a trucker, make sure your CB radio is on and talk to the drivers around you. If you are a new driver, try to find a seasoned driver who isn't talking a lot of big talk. We're all a little nervous out there if we really know what we're dealing with. You want to find a seasoned driver with a healthy respect for physics to help talk you through it.

Don't follow too close

Traffic tends to bunch up on bad roads – the natural inclination is to follow other drivers. Stay away from 4-wheel drive vehicles. Often they are under the illusion that the roads are safer than they actually are.

Watch for warning signs

If there are 4-wheel vehicles spun out in the median or shoulder, the roads are bad. If you start seeing big trucks spun out, it's time to get off the roadway.

There's no load worth your life

If you are on dangerous roadways, your best bet is to find a safe spot to wait it out. If you can't find a spot in a rest stop, park on a ramp or anywhere out of the way. Try not to park on an incline. You're liable to get yourself stuck.

Carry supplies

In the unfortunate event that you end up stuck, spun out, wrecked, or just sitting in a backup, be sure

you have necessities with you. Review supply lists and have them on hand prior to travelling. Be sure you keep your diesel/gas tanks full so you won't run out.

Treat your diesel

Diesel gels when it gets really cold. If your diesel gels, your truck won't run. If you are facing winter weather conditions, you need to put an anti-gel additive in your tanks before you fuel, so it mixes in. It's a good idea to stock up ahead of time and/or buy somewhere rather than expecting the truck stop to have it in stock. They tend to run out right when you need it as everyone else already bought from them.

Slow down

Observe speed limits and match your speed to road conditions. Never utilize cruise control on slippery roads.

ABS Brakes

Apply a steady firm pressure on brake pedal.

Use safety equipment

If you're in a crash and you are using seat belts and other safety equipment, you are 11 times more likely to survive.

Stay sober

Drugs and alcohol dramatically increase your odds of having a fatal crash involving yourself and possibly an innocent driver.

Stay awake

Fatigue and falling asleep at the wheel are significant risks. Pull over to rest if you are feeling fatigued.

Don't crowd the plow

Stay well back and never drive through "white-outs". It's never safe to drive when you can't see what's ahead of you - even for short distances.

Stay with your vehicle

If you become stranded, it is safer to stay with your vehicle than it is to walk for help.

Emergency Supplies:

- Cell Phone
- Shovel
- Tire chains
- Booster cables
- Fire extinguisher
- Windshield scraper
- Bright red or orange cloth and a whistle
- Toilet tissue

- Flashlight
- Sleeping bag or blankets/layered clothing
- 50 ft nylon cord
- 3 lb coffee can
- Candle and dry matches (some lighters won't light in extreme cold)
- Drinking water and high energy food
- Battery operated or wind up radio
- Something to read to help keep you awake

Winter Trip Tips:

- Check road report
- Stay alert
- Maintain a slow and steady speed
- Don't have wheels turned to the left while waiting at a traffic light to make a left turn.
- Plan your route and let someone know your trip plan. Don't deviate.
- Carry repair tools such as pliers, wrenches, screw drivers, pocket knife. Also carry tire chains, booster cables, tow rope, gas line antifreeze, and container of sand.
- Make sure tires have M+S or All Season tread suitable for winter driving, and that they are in good driving condition.
- Make sure your exhaust is leak-free to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Make sure all lighting equipment is working; turn lights on when visibility is reduced
- Windshield wipers need to be working properly and washer reservoir filled with antifreeze solvent.
- Heater and defroster need to be working properly. Check radiator, heater core and all hoses that carry anti-freeze solution to see that they are in good condition and free of leaks. The solution should be good to at least 40 below zero.
- Oil – make sure you have winter weight oil in the engine.
- Battery – Batteries are weaker in cold weather so keep yours properly maintained.
- Fuel System – keep fuel tank full

If you should go off the road or get stuck:

- If caught in a blizzard stay in your vehicle.
- If stranded, attempt to park your vehicle facing into the wind to prevent snow banks from covering your tailpipe or updrafts into the vehicle.
- Run your vehicle sparingly – 15 minutes every hour is recommended.
- If extreme cold, it may be necessary to run the engine continuously as it may not restart if shut off.
- Never go to sleep with the engine running.
- Keep tailpipe clear of snow.

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