

Winter Driving Tips

As winter settles in across rural Manitoba, roads transform into a challenging landscape of snow, ice, and reduced visibility. Each year, we see too many preventable accidents due to unprepared drivers. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) want to remind everyone of key precautions to stay safe on the roads this season.

1. Prepare Your Vehicle

Winterizing your vehicle is your first line of defense against unpredictable conditions. Ensure your car is equipped with winter tires, which provide better traction on icy and snowy surfaces. Regularly check your battery, wipers, and fluid levels, and top up with winter-grade washer fluid to combat ice buildup. Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent freezing in extreme cold.

2. Pack a Winter Emergency Kit

In Manitoba's harsh winter, being stranded can quickly turn dangerous. Pack a kit with essentials such as:

- A blanket or extra clothing
- Non-perishable snacks and water
- A flashlight and extra batteries
- A snowbrush, ice scraper, and shovel
- Jumper cables and a tow rope
- Traction aids like sand or kitty litter

A fully charged cellphone and car charger are also crucial for calling for help.

3. Adapt Your Driving

The golden rule of winter driving is to **slow down**. Speed limits are based on ideal conditions, not winter's icy roads. Increase your following distance to allow for longer stopping times and brake gently to avoid skidding. If you feel your tires lose traction, remain calm, steer in the direction you want to go, and avoid slamming the brakes.

When approaching intersections, especially in rural Manitoba where visibility may be limited, proceed cautiously as icy patches can be deceptive.

4. Stay Informed

Check weather forecasts and road conditions before heading out. Manitoba's 511 service provides up-to-date information on road closures and driving conditions. If the weather is severe, consider postponing non-essential travel. It's always better to arrive late than to risk not arriving at all.

5. Be Patient and Courteous

Winter conditions demand extra patience. Avoid aggressive driving behaviors like tailgating, speeding, or quick lane changes. Clear all snow and ice from your vehicle before driving to maintain visibility and prevent debris from endangering other drivers.

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6. Know When to Call for Help

If you find yourself in trouble, stay with your vehicle—it offers shelter and is easier for rescuers to locate. Call for assistance and use your hazard lights to signal distress.

The RCMP are committed to ensuring Manitobans get through the winter safely. By following these precautions, you can do your part to keep the roads safe for everyone.

Drive safe, stay warm, and let's work together to make this winter accident-free.