



CIRSA HAZARD ALERT

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SAFER TOGETHER

Hazard Alert – Survive Winter Driving



Public entity employees will encounter numerous situations unique to Colorado driving each winter. Whether it involves mountain, plains, rural or urban driving, prepare yourself and your vehicle to avoid collisions resulting from icy, windswept or snow packed roads. Each year we experience preventable collisions and injuries due to limited visibility, inadequate following and braking distance, distractions, and vehicles not in top condition for the elements.

Recent examples include:

A police officer was responding to a traffic accident and lost control of his vehicle on black ice on a major freeway off ramp and slid into a concrete bridge support.

A snow plow operator was going too fast for conditions and slid through an intersection against the red light and struck a passenger vehicle that was proceeding through on a green light. The passenger vehicle was struck broadside, and the driver sustained serious injuries.

An office employee was running late to get to work in the morning and failed to clean off her windshield for adequate visibility. Traversing a four-way stop intersection, she failed to see a vehicle approaching from her right and the two vehicles collided in the intersection.

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Conditions that contribute to these collisions include:

- Not anticipating potentially hazardous road conditions.
- Not leaving enough braking distance to stop in time at a red light.
- Not allowing enough time to reach your destination when traffic conditions and weather dictate the need.
- Not adequately preparing the vehicle for winter driving.

Recommendations to avoid being victimized by winter driving perils include:

- Start with a vehicle in tip-top condition: check tires for adequate tread and proper inflation, windshield wipers, washer fluid, coolant, battery and belts.
- Allow more time and more stopping distance when traveling.
- Clean off all windows, mirrors, headlights, turn signals and brake lights of snow and ice.
- Keep snow from blowing up on the windshield or sliding off the roof by cleaning the hood and roof of accumulated snow.
- Start out slowly to obtain proper tire grip without spinning the wheels. Allow for smooth braking with plenty of clearance to the vehicle ahead.
- Slow down. Don't tailgate. Don't brake suddenly on inclines or curves.
- Anticipate "black ice" on bridges, overpasses, and in shaded areas.
- Pay attention to weather reports, including wind chill factors and temperature extremes.
- Plan your route and always make others aware of your travel plans.

Understand Vehicle Dynamics

Weight transfer occurs whenever the vehicle is subjected to acceleration (weight transfer to the rear), braking (weight transfer to the front), and cornering/steering (transfer to the inside or outside of the road edge).

Loss of control and panic may occur when you experience wheel lockup (let off the brake until tires regain grip), or wheel spin (let off the gas until tires regain grip).

To prevent skids, steer smoothly, and avoid any abrupt or sudden changes in the direction of travel. Should your vehicle lose traction (grip) and start to skid, don't panic, and don't brake. To correct a skid due to over-steer (rear of the vehicle sliding out) gently accelerate to transfer more weight to the rear tires. For under-steer (vehicle not reacting to steering input), let up on the accelerator and don't brake but allow the vehicle to naturally slow and straighten the steering wheel (transferring more weight towards the front tires) until the vehicle starts to react to the steering input.

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Survive Winter Driving (cont.)

Braking on ice and snow. If your vehicle is not equipped with an Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), pump and release the brakes just prior to wheel lock up. Continue doing this until the vehicle is stopped or is back under control. If equipped with ABS, simply push down on the brake and hold it. ABS offers a certain amount of steering effectiveness while the brakes are being continually applied. Never brake in a curve when grip is reduced. Brake before the turn, steer through the curve, then accelerate after exiting.

Preparation includes the driver as well. Carry emergency supplies in case you find yourself stranded or in an emergency situation. Consider having: Water • Nonperishable high-energy foods • Flashlight (with extra batteries) • Flares or reflectors • Jumper cables • Matches and candles • Tire chains • Shovel • Snow brush and scraper • Layered clothing with gloves, hat, and snow boots • Travel AM/FM weather radio • Blankets or sleeping bags • First aid kit • Fire extinguisher • Fully charged cell phone.

**Adjust your speed for weather and traffic conditions
and
Always buckle up!**