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RESOURCES

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Winter Driving Safety

by Sarah Bruno, ARM

When the days become shorter and the weather cooler, it's time to start preparing for driving in winter weather. Winter weather in California can include: rain, snow, fog, and ice – and can catch you off guard as weather changes quickly. The 2 main ways to ensure an agency is prepared are safe equipment and safe practices, both are outlined below.

Ensure the vehicle is prepared for winter weather

Make sure the vehicle is in good working order. This means ensuring the vehicle has been taken in for routine service, according to manufacturers' specification and agency procedures. In addition to regular vehicle system inspection and maintenance, the following should be included as part of a winter pre-trip inspection:

- Check tire tread depth and pressure.
- Check wiper blades for deterioration.
- Check windshield fluid level – ensure there is sufficient fluid and the appropriate type for freezing prevention as needed.
- If the vehicle is not equipped with 4-wheel drive and will be driven in the snow, ensure the correct tire chains are present. Chain installation and removal training may be required for drivers.
- Snow should be removed from the entire vehicle (not just the windshield) before driving, ensure the appropriate tool for the job is present (ice scraper and snow brush).
- Update the emergency supplies and include warm blankets and clothing.



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Safe practices

While some safe driving practices should be applied year-round, winter weather brings with it additional hazards on the road. The following safe practices should be followed when driving during winter weather:

- Limit distractions – this includes eating and using cell phones and other electronics while driving.
- Winter weather can affect not only your visibility but also that of others on the road.
 - Turn on headlights – if wipers are on, headlights must be on per [California law](#). In foggy conditions, headlights (especially fog lights if vehicle is equipped with them) are also helpful but avoid using high-beams as this can impair your ability to see down the road.
 - Increase following distance and slow down – traction is reduced by water on the road, slow down at least 5-10 mph when roads are wet.
- Avoid sudden stops and quick direction changes.
- Plan for longer travel time.
- Consider providing training for employees required to drive in rainy and inclement weather.
- Ensure a reliable means of communication should an accident or delay occur. Check in with a supervisor or other contact before departure and when the destination is reached safely.
- Monitor weather conditions and forecasts along your route – consider if the trip should be postponed for safety.
- Check road conditions before departure and monitor along the route as road conditions are constantly changing.
- Understand the three levels of chain requirements in California and the equipment of the vehicle (four, front or rear wheel drive? Snow tires?). Snow tires in California will have the M+S (mud and snow) imprint [see photo example].
- Appropriate footwear should be worn to prevent slip and falls in snow or ice around the vehicle.



While these reminders are helpful, it is also important to reference/review agency policies and procedures that govern driving a motor vehicle on behalf of your employer. Review these winter driving safety reminders each year with employees to ensure preparedness and safety on the road.

For additional assistance or questions regarding winter driving safety, please [contact](#) PRISM's Risk Control Department.