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Winter Survival In Your Car

Everyone should be cautious about traveling in extreme winter weather. Cold, snow and ice are demanding on cars, drivers and passengers. Cold affects metal, rubber and other materials in your car. It can reduce the effectiveness of your vehicle's battery by at least 50 percent. It can freeze tires and keep them flat on the bottom for at least the first half-mile of travel. It can thicken your car's lubricants, making the engine work harder than normal. Most importantly, extreme winter weather can threaten your safety. Follow these tips to stay safe while traveling this winter.

- * **Plan Before You Travel** Simple planning can save you trouble and even save your life.
- * **Prepare Your Vehicle** Be sure your vehicle is in good winter driving condition. Take along the emergency equipment referred to in our "Winter Driving" safety tips. Keep your gas tank at least one-half full.
- * **Be Aware of the Weather** Listen to forecasts, road reports and storm warnings. Allow extra time for trips in severe weather.
- * **Make Yourself Easy to Find** Tell someone where you are going and what route you will take. Call them to confirm that you arrived at your destination safely. If you stall or get stuck, tie a colored banner to your antenna or hang it out a window. At night, remove the cover from your dome light to make the light more visible to passing cars or road crews. Run your hazard lights only when you hear or see other vehicles approaching.
- * **Stay in Your Vehicle** Walking in a storm can be dangerous. It is easy to become disoriented or exhausted in a heavy storm. Your vehicle serves as shelter—stay put.
- * **Avoid Overexertion** Shoveling snow or repositioning your car by pushing takes a lot of effort in a storm. You risk cardiac exertion or injury.
- * **Keep Cool (Physically and Emotionally)** Don't work hard enough to get hot and sweaty. Wet clothing loses insulation value, making you more susceptible to hypothermia. Try to stay clam. The storm will end and you will be found, especially if you have let someone know where you are going.
- * **Keep Fresh Air in Your Vehicle** It is much better to be cold and awake than comfortably warm and sleepy. Wet or wind-driven snow can plug your vehicle's exhaust system and cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your vehicle. Don't run the engine unless you are sure that the exhaust pipe is free of snow. Keep snow off of the radiator to prevent the engine from overheating.
- * **Run Your Vehicle Periodically** Depending on how much fuel you have, run your vehicle for 10 minutes every hour if possible. Run the heater and the dome light while the vehicle is running—it is also a great opportunity to catch a weather report on the radio and to charge your cell phone.
- * **Stay Warm Without Fuel** Keep your blood circulating freely by loosening tight clothing, changing positions frequently and moving your arms and legs. Huddle close to one another. Rub your hands together or put them in your armpits or between your legs.
- * **Don't Expect to Be Comfortable** The challenge is to survive until you are found. If you have comfort items such as a stuffed animal, book or board game in your vehicle, it will make the time you spend waiting for help much more bearable.