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MEMA ISSUES TIPS TO ENSURE SAFE WINTER DRIVING

Tips to Prepare Your Car for the Season

FRAMINGHAM, MA – The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has issued information to help people prepare for another New England Winter Season. Attached are a list of Automobile Safety Tips and a list of items to be included in your Winter Emergency Car Kit.

“Since approximately 70% of winter deaths related to snow and ice occur in automobiles, now is the proper time for individuals and families to take the necessary steps to ensure their safety on the roads during the upcoming Winter Season,” said MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz. “Winter weather can present challenges that can be made easier with some basic planning.”

AUTOMOBILE SAFETY TIPS

- Have a well-stocked Winter Emergency Car Kit.
- Keep your gas tank at least half-full.
- Install good winter tires with adequate tread and pressure.
- Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal. Keep all windows clear of snow and ice and keep your headlights and taillights clear, as well.
- Check your antifreeze, battery, windshield wipers and wiper fluid.
- Plan long trips carefully, listening to the radio or NOAA Weather Radio for the latest weather forecasts and road conditions. Consider Public Transportation.
- IF there is poor visibility, drive with your headlights on to see and be seen.
- Let others know your timetable and primary and alternate routes. Allow extra time. The first ½” of snow is sometimes the most slippery. Allow adequate braking distance from the car in front of you.
- Slow down. Many times hazards like black ice are not seen until it is too late. Remember bridges and overpasses can freeze up sooner than roadways.
- Be extra alert. Snowdrifts can hide children or other vehicles.
- Yield to snowplows giving them plenty of room to safely do their job. Be patient and follow at a safe distance.
- Travel during daylight hours, and if possible, take another person with you.
- If a blizzard traps you in your car, pull off the highway. Call 9-1-1. Turn on hazard lights and hang a brightly colored distress flag/cloth from your radio antenna or window.
- Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are more likely to find you. Do not set out on foot, unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.

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- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, crack open the window slightly for ventilation. Periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe.
- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion. In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with passengers.
- Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electricity energy needs: the use of lights, heat and radio.
- At night, turn on the inside dome light so work crews and rescuers can see you.
- After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.

WINTER EMERGENCY CAR KIT

- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Charged cell phone/automobile charger
- Basic first-aid kit
- Necessary medications
- Pocket knife
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Extra clothes (include rain gear, boots, mittens, socks)
- High-calorie, non-perishable foods (dried fruits, nuts, canned food)
- Manual can opener
- Container of water
- Windshield scraper & brush
- Fire extinguisher
- Shovel
- Sand/road salt/cat litter for generating traction
- Tire chains or traction mats
- Basic tool kit (pliers, wrench, screwdriver)
- Tow rope
- Battery jumper cables
- Road flares/reflectors
- Brightly colored cloth to utilize as a flag
- Road maps

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state and local government agencies, and with the private sector - individuals, families, non-profits and businesses - MEMA ensures the Commonwealth's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating threats and hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response, and strengthening our capacity to rebuild and recover. For additional information about MEMA and Winter Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema.

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