

TRUCKING TIPS

December 1, 2006

With the season of bad weather approaching, it is time to remember that while bad weather may excuse a delay, it does not excuse an accident. Don't be fooled by those who go sailing by in a cloud of spray or blowing snow. You may find them piled up somewhere on the road ahead. A few tips to prepare you and your drivers for safe winter driving:

Slow Down! Drive according to road and weather conditions. Remember, the posted speed limits are intended for dry road conditions. Always adjust your speed to changing conditions. Usually this means slowing down and increasing your alertness.

Clear snow and ice from all windows and lights; clearing the roof may be required by law and doing so will improve fuel economy.

Leave plenty of room for stopping and brake early; it takes more time to stop when roads are wet or icy.

Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows; stay at least 15 car lengths (200 feet) back and don't pass on the right.

Watch for icy surfaces on bridges, even when the rest of the road seems to be dry; bridge decks ice up first.

Routine maintenance is a key step. Autumn is the time for an engine tune-up. Faulty belts, hose and spark plug can be caught before they become a real problem. Brakes need to be checked and adjusted. Check all your fluid levels. Winter weight oil should be switched and your anti-freeze replaced with fresh to prevent rusting.

Look farther ahead in traffic; actions by other drivers will alert you to problems and give you extra time to react. Slow down. Be alert for other drivers around you who may be having problems on slippery roads.

Don't ever use cruise control or overdrive when it's freezing; even roads that appear clear can have isolated slippery spots and the short touch of your brakes to deactivate cruise control can cause you to lose control.

If you're driving a unit with anti-lock brakes (ABS), do not pump your brakes, but rather, "stomp and steer." By themselves, anti-lock brakes do not guarantee safety. The most they can do is give a little more steering control by keeping some of the braked wheels from locking up and causing a complete loss of directional control in a hard brake application. ABS does not necessarily give you shorter stopping distance. ABS does not provide more traction if the road is slippery due to rain, sleet, snow, ice, or other bad surface conditions. Your objective should be to continue to drive so you don't even activate ABS if you have it.

Drive with your headlights on. All lights should be checked and in good working order. There are fewer daylight hours in the winter and you will most likely be using your lights more often.

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