



Safety Sentinel



Fond du Lac County Safety Committee Mission Statement

It is the Fond du Lac County Safety Committee's mission to provide safety awareness, education, and advocacy to all Fond du Lac County employees, while recognizing it is both the employer and employee's responsibility to maintain a safe work environment.

January 2019

Snowplow Safety Tips

When snow comes, snowplows are not far behind. Snowplows make roads safer for everyone. Cars, SUVs, school buses, trucks and pedestrians are all better off once they've come through, even if they are equipped with four-wheel drive or tire chains. The plows make the roads passable and reduce the risk of getting stuck in snow.

However, drivers need to keep safety at the front of their mind when sharing the road with snowplows. Snowplows weigh four times more than the average car, and a collision with one can be deadly.

Unfortunately, collisions between snowplows and other vehicles are common. Although most reports don't differentiate snowplow accidents from other kinds of accidents, some states do estimate them.

The Iowa Department of Transportation, for example, says an average of 46 accidents each winter involve a snowplow. The department has paid more than \$1.2 million to repair other vehicles and settle claims for injuries caused by these accidents.

Drivers need to keep a few facts about snowplows in mind to be safe. First, snowplow drivers are driving in conditions that limit their visibility. This is certainly true if it's snowing. However, even when stopped, weather conditions could still make it difficult to see.

Snowplow drivers are doing a dangerous but incredibly important job. They work 12-hour shifts

in hair-raising conditions. They may be distracted, cold, tired, or all of the above. It's possible that they'll turn onto intersections directly in front of drivers. One such accident in Iowa occurred when a snowplow turned left, crossing traffic. A driver in a van did not have time to stop and slid into the plow, totaling the van but thankfully resulting in no injuries.



Drivers must drive defensively around snowplows. Be cautious whenever you see them, give them a lot of room and follow the three tips below.

1. Do not pass

Passing a snowplow is a pretty bad idea, all things considered. They may be driving very slowly, but you are always better off following a snowplow than driving in front of one, because the road in front of them hasn't been plowed yet!

Even if you have four-wheel drive, just let the snowplow do its job before you try to pass it. Some snowplows come equipped with specialized front and side plows. These side plows, called wing plows, jut out 10 to 12 feet on the side. If you pass them, you run the risk of not clearing the plows, especially if visibility is limited.



2. Follow at a safe distance

Snowplows need to go about 35 miles per hour to do a proper job. The slow speed may make you impatient, but you need to drive a safe distance behind them. Many states have adopted the slogan: [Don't Crowd the Plow](#). Make that slogan yours to keep you and your passengers safe around [these 30 ton vehicles](#).

Snowplows may need to stop or swerve abruptly to avoid obstacles, including stranded cars. They aren't driving erratically, necessarily. Drivers are up against unpredictable conditions, and if you're driving behind them, you will be as well. You need a safe following distance in case they need to stop suddenly or back up.



3. Keep your tailpipe clear

You don't necessarily need to be driving to get into a dangerous situation with a snowplow.

Last January, a huge blizzard dumped three feet of snow on parts of the Eastern U.S. As people began digging their cars out of the snow, there were a few tragic stories of people who got inside their cars to warm up and never got back out of them alive.

If your car is parked on the street, and you pause while clearing it off to get inside to warm up, passing snowplows could plow you back in. Except now, your car is running, and your tailpipe could potentially be blocked by snow. In this situation, instead of being able to exhaust to the outside, the carbon monoxide backs up into the car. [It can take a matter of minutes](#) for the carbon monoxide to reach lethal levels, at which point you would pass out from the lack of oxygen.

Avoid this situation by clearing away all the snow around your tailpipe before you ever start your car. If there is a lot of snow on the road, avoid situations where you might be sitting in a running car when a snowplow goes by. And if you do get plowed in, stay calm and immediately turn off the engine. You may need to exit your vehicle from another door if the driver's side door is stuck, or call for help if you are trapped.

Stay safe this winter. The snowplows are out on the roads to help you. Stay safe and help them do their job by following these three simple tips.

Source: <https://www.progressive.com/lifelanes/snowplow-safety-tips-save-life/>

Reference: <https://wisconsin.gov/Pages/doing-business/local-gov/hwy-mnt/winter-maintenance/facts.aspx>

Fireplace Safety

Curling up in front of a warm fireplace is one of the many joys of the fall and winter seasons. Every type of fireplace, whether wood-burning, gas, or electric, poses a potential danger to children.

Use these tips to keep your family safe from fireplace dangers:

- If possible, keep a window cracked open while the [fire](#) is burning.
- Be certain the damper or flue is open before starting a fire. Keeping the damper or flue open until the fire is out will draw smoke out of the house. The damper can be checked by looking



up into the chimney with a flashlight or mirror. Do not close the damper until the embers have completely stopped burning.

- Use dry and well-aged wood. Wet or green wood causes more smoke and contributes to soot buildup in the chimney. Dried wood burns with less smoke and burns more evenly,
- Smaller pieces of wood placed on a grate burn faster and produce less smoke.
- Clean out ashes from previous fires. Levels of ash at the base of the fireplace should be kept to 1 inch or less because a thicker layer restricts the air supply to logs, resulting in more smoke.
- The chimney should be checked annually by a professional. Even if the chimney is not due for cleaning, it is important to check for animal nests or other blockages that could prevent smoke from escaping.
- Make sure the area around the fireplace is clear of anything that is potentially flammable (i.e. furniture, drapes, newspapers, books, etc.). If these items get too close to the fireplace, they could catch fire.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Make sure it is completely out before going to bed or leaving the house. If you leave the room while the fire is burning or the fireplace is still hot, take your small child with you.
- Minimize your child's chance of [burns](#) from the hot glass front of some fireplaces. Safety screens can be installed to reduce the risk of burns.
- Put fireplace tools and accessories out of a young child's reach. Also, remove any lighters and matches.
- Install both smoke and [carbon monoxide](#) detectors. Test them monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.
- Keep a fire extinguisher on hand.
- Communicate to children as early as possible the dangers of fires and the heat generated from them.

Source:

https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Fireplace-Safety_Tips.aspx

Tips about Hypothermia

Hypothermia results from exposure to low temperatures, wind and moisture over a period of time. It can occur on the ski hill, in a car, falling in water that is cold or anywhere else where these factors exist that cause the body temperature to fall below normal. Parents need to be aware of the causes and symptoms of hypothermia in children as well as other adults and know what to do when you suspect hypothermia. For older children and teenagers, it is also important to educate them.



When conditions exist to pose a risk of hypothermia, be observant and seek medical attention immediately if you suspect or observe any symptoms which can include:

- Complaints about being cold and irritability
- Uncontrollable shivering
- Impaired or slurred speech or vision
- Clumsy movements
- Blurred vision
- Severe symptoms can include stiff muscles, dark and puffy skin, irregular heart and breathing rates and unconsciousness.

If you notice any of these symptoms, you should get the person to a warm, dry place as soon as possible, remove any wet clothing and seek medical attention **IMMEDIATELY**. NEVER RUB THE SKIN. Bundling in a blanket will help keep heat in. An always soothing parent/child cuddle will help warm up the child and also bring comfort to both.

Source:

<http://www.hubbardtwppd.org/Safety%20Tips/hypothermia.htm>



Frostbite

Frostbite can occur in cold temperatures, especially if you are improperly dressed, or if you have problems with circulation. Frostbite occurs when a body part freezes. It most often occurs in uncovered or poorly covered areas, such as the fingers, toes, nose, ears, or cheeks. A person who is frostbitten may develop white spots on the skin of the infected area. The skin may also feel numb and painful. Frostbite can be treated by slowly thawing the area in warm (but not hot) water. You can also use body heat; for example, placing frostbitten fingers into the armpit. Medical care should be sought as soon as possible.



How to Stay Safe in Extreme Cold

- Pay attention to the weather. When there are high and steady winds, you can lose heat from your body more quickly.

- Dress in several layers of loose clothing. Inner layers should be able to trap body heat, yet allow the skin to breathe. Wear thermal underwear made of silk, wool, or polypropylene. These are the best materials to capture heat and wick away moisture from your skin. The outer layer of clothing should be wind resistant to reduce the loss of body heat due to wind.
- Don't forget waterproof boots, a hat, gloves or mittens, and a scarf or mask to cover your nose and mouth.
- Skip the heavy outdoor chores if you have a heart condition or high blood pressure. Exertion adds the workload of staying warm and can strain your heart.
- Consider using cleats that slip over your shoes or boots for extra traction on hard-packed snow or ice.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages prior to going outdoors (and even while outside), as they can cause your body to lose heat more rapidly. Eat a healthy snack and drink a warm beverage, such as warm tea or broth. This can help maintain your body temperature in the cold air.
- Listen to the weather report for travel advisories and avoid unnecessary travel during bad weather. If you must travel by car, make sure to tell someone your destination, when you expect to arrive, and the route you will take.

Source: <http://www.healthline.com/health/first-aid/cold-weather-safety#Frostbite3>

Return via inter-office mail marked "Safety Suggestion Box," give to a Safety Committee member, or put in Safety Suggestion Box at the City/County Govt. Center, 4th floor lobby.

Safety Suggestion

Date: _____

Please share any safety concern or suggestion:

Name (Optional) _____

MM:ak



Winter Driving Tips

When the chilly temperatures of winter set in, will your vehicle be ready for the cold?

If you live in a part of the country that gets snow and ice, are you prepared to drive in those conditions? Planning and preventative maintenance are important year-round—but especially when it comes to winter driving.

Before You Go

Get Your Car Serviced

No one wants their car to break down in any season, but especially not in cold or snowy winter weather. Start the season off right by ensuring your vehicle is in optimal condition.

- Visit your mechanic for a tune-up and other routine maintenance.
- Have your vehicle checked thoroughly for leaks, badly worn hoses, or other needed parts, repairs, and replacements.



Check for Recalls

Owners may not always know that their vehicle is under an open recall and needs to be repaired. NHTSA's Recalls Look-up Tool lets you enter a Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to quickly learn if that specific vehicle has been recalled in the last 15 years and whether it has been repaired or not. Check for recalls on your vehicle by searching now: www.nhtsa.gov/recalls. If your vehicle is under a recall, get it fixed at your nearest dealer FOR FREE.

VIN

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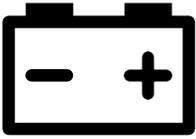
Know Your Car

Every vehicle handles differently; this is particularly true when driving on wet, icy, or snowy roads. Take time now to learn how your vehicle handles under winter weather driving conditions.

- Before driving your vehicle, clean snow, ice or dirt from the windows, the forward sensors, headlights, tail lights, backup camera and other sensors around the vehicle.
- Practice driving on snow-covered or icy roads—but not on a main road. Sharpen your winter weather driving skills and know how your vehicle handles on snow by practicing in an empty parking lot. See your vehicle's manual to familiarize yourself with the features on your vehicle—such as antilock brakes and electronic stability control—and how the features perform in slippery conditions. For example, your vehicle or pedals may pulsate when controlling traction.
- For electric and hybrid-electric vehicles, minimize the drain on the battery. If the vehicle has a thermal heating pack for the battery, plug your vehicle in whenever it's not in use. Pre-heat the passenger compartment before you unplug your vehicle in the morning.
- When renting a car, become familiar with the vehicle before driving it off the lot. Know the location of the hazard lights switch in case of emergency, and review the owner's manual so that you're prepared for any driving situation that may arise.



Go Over Your Vehicle Safety Checklist



Battery

When the temperature drops, so does battery power. For gasoline and diesel engines, it takes more battery power to start your vehicle in cold weather. For electric and hybrid-electric vehicles, the driving range is reduced when the battery is cold, and battery systems work better after they warm up.

- Have your mechanic check your battery for sufficient voltage, amperage and reserve capacity.
- Have the charging system and belts inspected.
- Replace the battery or make necessary system repairs, including simple things like tightening the battery cable connections.
- Keep gasoline in a hybrid-electric vehicle, to support the gasoline engine.



Lights

See and be seen! Make sure all the lights on your vehicle are in working order. Check your headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers, and interior lights. Towing a trailer? Be sure to also check your trailer brake lights and turn signals. Trailer light connection failure is a common problem and a serious safety hazard.



Cooling System

- Make sure the cooling system is in proper working order.
- Make sure you have enough coolant in your vehicle and the coolant meets the manufacturer's specifications. See your vehicle owner's manual for specific recommendations on coolant.
- Thoroughly check the cooling system for leaks or have your mechanic do it for you.
- Have the coolant tested for proper mix, proper pH (acidity) and strength of the built-in corrosion inhibitors. Over time, the rust inhibitors in antifreeze break down and become ineffective.
- Drain and replace the coolant in your vehicle as recommended by the manufacturer, to remove dirt and rust particles that can clog the cooling system and cause it to fail.



Windshield

Washer Reservoir

You can go through a lot of windshield wiper fluid fairly quickly in a single snowstorm, so be prepared for whatever might come your way.

- Completely fill your vehicle's reservoir before the first snow hits.
- Use high-quality "winter" fluid with de-icer and keep extra in your vehicle.

Wipers and Defrosters

Safe winter driving depends on achieving and maintaining the best visibility possible.

- Make sure your windshield wipers work; replace worn blades.
- Consider installing heavy-duty winter wipers if your area gets a lot of snow and ice.
- Check to see that your front and rear window defrosters work properly.

Go Over Your Vehicle Safety Checklist *continued*



Floor Mats

Improperly installed floor mats in your vehicle may interfere with the operation of the accelerator or brake pedal, increasing the risk of a crash.

- Remove old floor mats before installing new mats; never stack mats.
- Use mats that are the correct size and fit for your vehicle.
- Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions for mat installation. Use available retention clips to secure the mat and prevent it from sliding forward.
- Every time the mats are removed for any reason, verify that the driver's mat is reinstalled correctly.



Tires

- If you plan to use snow tires, have them installed in the fall so you are prepared before it snows. Check out www.nhtsa.gov/tires for tire ratings before buying new ones and look for winter tires with the snowflake symbol.
- Regardless of season, inspect your tires at least once a month and before long road trips. It only takes about five minutes. If you find yourself driving under less-than-optimal road conditions this winter, you'll be glad you took the time. Don't forget to check your spare tire.
- As the outside temperature drops, so does tire inflation pressure. Make sure each tire is filled to the vehicle manufacturer's recommended inflation pressure, which is listed in your owner's manual and on a placard located on the driver's side door frame. The correct pressure is NOT the number listed on the tire. Be sure to check tires when they are cold, which means the car hasn't been driven for at least three hours.
- Look closely at your tread and replace tires that have uneven wear or insufficient tread. Tread should be at least 2/32 of an inch or greater on all tires.
- Check the age of each tire. Some vehicle manufacturers recommend that tires be replaced every six years regardless of use, but check your owner's manual to find out.
- For more information on tire safety, visit NHTSA's [Tires](#) page.

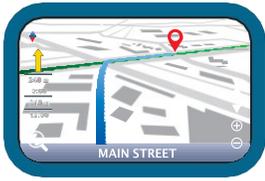


Stock Your Vehicle

Carry items in your vehicle to handle common winter driving-related tasks, such as cleaning off your windshield, as well as any supplies you might need in an emergency. Keep the following in your vehicle:

- Snow shovel, broom, and ice scraper.
- Abrasive material such as sand or kitty litter, in case your vehicle gets stuck in the snow.
- Jumper cables, flashlight, and warning devices such as flares and emergency markers.
- Blankets for protection from the cold.
- A cell phone with charger, water, food, and any necessary medicine (for longer trips or when driving in lightly populated areas).

Go Over Your Vehicle Safety Checklist *continued*



Plan Your Travel and Route

Keep yourself and others safe by planning ahead before you venture out into bad weather.

- Check the weather, road conditions, and traffic.
- Don't rush; allow plenty of time to get to your destination safely. Plan to leave early if necessary.
- Familiarize yourself with directions and maps before you go, even if you use a GPS system, and let others know your route and anticipated arrival time.

On the Road



Stay Alert

- Keep your gas tank close to full, even with a hybrid-electric vehicle. If you get stuck in a traffic jam or in snow, you might need more fuel than you anticipated to get home or to keep warm.
- If road conditions are hazardous, avoid driving if possible. Wait until road and weather conditions improve before venturing out in your vehicle.
- On longer trips, plan enough time to stop to stretch, get something to eat, return calls or text messages, and change drivers or rest if you feel drowsy.



Driving in Winter Conditions

- Drive slowly. It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface. On the road, increase your following distance enough so that you'll have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you.
- Know whether your vehicle has an antilock brake system and learn how to use it properly. Antilock brake systems prevent your wheels from locking up during braking. If you have antilock brakes, apply firm, continuous pressure to the brake pedal. If you don't have antilock brakes, you may need to pump your brakes if you feel your wheels starting to lock up.



Navigating Around Snow Plows

- Don't crowd a snow plow or travel beside it. Snow plows travel slowly, make wide turns, stop often, overlap lanes, and exit the road frequently.
- The road behind an active snow plow is safer to drive on. If you find yourself behind a snow plow, stay behind it or use caution when passing.
- When you are driving behind a snow plow, don't follow or stop too closely. A snow plow operator's field-of-vision is limited; if you can't see the mirrors, the driver can't see you. Also, materials used to de-ice the road could hit your vehicle.
- Snow plows can throw up a cloud of snow that can reduce your visibility to zero in less time than you can react. Never drive into a snow cloud – it can conceal vehicles or hazards.

In an Emergency



What to Do in a Winter Emergency

If you are stopped or stalled in wintry weather, follow these safety rules:

- Stay with your car and don't overexert yourself.
- Put bright markers on the antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light turned on.
- To avoid asphyxiation from carbon monoxide poisoning, don't run your car for long periods of time with the windows up or in an enclosed space. If you must run your vehicle, clear the exhaust pipe of any snow and run it only sporadically — just long enough to stay warm.

Safety First



Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones

- Always wear your seat belt and ensure that everyone else in your vehicle is buckled up in age- and size-appropriate restraints.

Protect Your Children

- Remember that all children under age 13 should always ride properly restrained in the back seat.
- Make sure car seats and booster seats are properly installed and that any children riding with you are in the right car seat, booster seat, or seat belt for their age and size. See NHTSA's [child passenger safety recommendations](#) to find out [how to select the right seat](#) for your child's age and size. To learn more and find a free car seat inspection station near you, please visit the [Child Car Seat Inspection Station Locator](#).
- Though thick outerwear will keep your children warm, it can interfere with the proper harness fit on your child in a car seat. Instead, place blankets or coats around your child after the harness is snug and secure.
- Never leave your child unattended in or around your vehicle.
- Always remember to lock your vehicle and to keep your keys out of reach when exiting so children do not play or get trapped inside.

Avoid Risky Driving Behaviors

- Do not text or engage in any activities that may distract you while driving.
- Obey all posted speed limits, but drive even slower if necessary for weather conditions.
- Drive sober. Alcohol and drugs impair perception, judgment, motor skills, and memory – the skills critical for safe and responsible driving.

