

STATEWIDE INSURANCE AGENCY DIGEST NO. 108

HOW TO DRIVE SAFELY IN SNOW AND ICE

Parts of Texas experience considerable snow and ice during a typical year, although all of Texas (including the Houston area as recently as December 4, 2009) can experience snow! Driving safely in snow and ice is very important in minimizing damage to persons and property that occur in traffic accidents.

Rule No. 1: Drive more slowly!

Even if you maintain control of your car, not everyone else will! So drive slowly but always be aware of other drivers.

Rule No. 2: Be aware of conditions outside the car

Is the temperature falling? Are conditions right for moisture in the air to condense and freeze on road surfaces forming black ice that is slick but nearly invisible? Black ice is especially common on bridges and overpasses.

Rule No. 3: Keep a greater distance from the car ahead and slow sooner for stops and turns

A car traveling 55 mph covers 81 feet per second. Distance between vehicles should double in marginal conditions, from one car length for every 10-mph of speed to two or three car lengths depending on just how bad conditions are. For example, on snow and ice, cars traveling 40mph should be 8 to 12 car lengths apart.

Rule No. 4: Check traction periodically and “manage” skids

Check traction periodically by tapping the brake. If the car starts to slide when the brakes are applied, stop braking immediately, and apply the brakes again but more slowly. Steer into skids, which means if your car is sliding to the right, turn the wheel to the right until you have control, then gently steer back onto the road or lane.

Rule No. 5: No body is born knowing how to drive

And this is especially true for driving in slippery conditions. Safe driving on snow and ice is learned only through practice. For most people, the best place to practice starting, turning, and stopping on snow is a large parking lot, empty of other vehicles.

Source: compiled in part from www.onthesnow.com