



Winter Driving

January 2026

Driving in winter presents special challenges for all of us. In addition to snow, ice and fog, winter brings fewer daylight hours in which to operate. As if that were not enough, other motorists often lack the ability, knowledge or temperament to safely navigate roadways in winter driving conditions.

Before you get started, check the weather forecast so you know what conditions you may encounter. The more you know, the better prepared you are. Be sure to perform a thorough pre-trip inspection to ensure your equipment is in peak operating condition, paying special attention to tires, lighting, windshield wipers and washer fluid. Once on the road, be prepared, patient and cautious and follow these safe driving practices:

- **Take control** — It is always your responsibility, as a professional driver, to maintain proper control of your vehicle at all times regardless of conditions. If the weather or road conditions become too dangerous to continue, stop. You are the captain of the ship.
- **Avoid driving while fatigued** — Getting proper rest before facing winter driving conditions significantly reduces risk.
- **Slow down** — Many accidents occur because drivers are traveling too fast for road conditions. Slower speeds give you more time to react if something unexpected happens.
- **Give yourself extra space** — Allow more distance between your vehicle and others. You should always have enough time and space to move out of harm's way. Avoid using cruise control on roads that appear slippery.
- **Hold the steering wheel firmly** — Sudden or sharp movements can quickly cause you to lose control. Keep your vehicle steady through ruts, high winds and icy conditions.
- **Brake and accelerate lightly** — Avoid sudden actions such as hard stopping or rapid acceleration. When you need to slow down quickly in slippery conditions, lightly pump your brakes to reduce the chance of locking your tires and losing control.

Winter presents challenges beyond operating your vehicle. Working in ice, snow and cold temperatures requires your full attention and awareness.

- Just as you do while driving, slow down when working outside your vehicle.
- During winter, icy running boards, steps and trailer decks account for thousands of slip-and-fall accidents. While most are relatively minor, a few drivers are seriously injured every year.
- Frostbite is another concern. Many frostbite injuries result from not wearing proper headgear or gloves while making deliveries, refueling or conducting pre- and post-trip inspections. The right clothing is essential to staying healthy, injury-free and behind the wheel.
- A good place to start winterizing yourself is with your footwear. Wear good-quality shoes or boots with oil-resistant soles and adequate ankle support. Consider investing in boot traction grips for added stability.
- Always maintain three points of contact when climbing into or out of the truck.
- Pack a change of clothes and a warm jacket.
- Carry granola bars, dried fruit, nuts and other high-energy food along with water or sports drinks in case you become stranded. Hard candy can help keep your mouth moist while providing some energy. Avoid salty foods.

As the Boy Scouts say, "Be prepared." It could save you money as well as keep you safe.

The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and **Centerline Drivers**, is a Microsoft Word document that you can print out and post as is, if appropriate, or modify any way you wish to make it a better fit for your drivers, including adding your company logo. If you are already doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at tmoore@nptc.org or (703)838-8898.