

# Dept. of Transportation: Safety depends on proper vehicle maintenance during winter season

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Winter in Wisconsin brings months of slippery conditions and subzero weather, so preparing yourself and your vehicle is key to a safe season.

Winter vehicle safety is Wisconsin State Patrol's January Law of the Month. It's an opportunity for every driver to make sure essential equipment is working properly before getting behind the wheel.

"A well-maintained vehicle is always important, but especially in harsh winter conditions. Check your vehicle to get to your destination safely," Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. "When you're driving in winter conditions, don't just prepare for the trip you anticipated, prepare for the unexpected."

## **Before you go**

Winter conditions can wear on your vehicle, so check these things regularly:

- Keep fuel tank at least half-full to prevent fuel lines from freezing and provide extra fuel if you get stranded; make sure electric vehicles are fully charged.
- Check condition of battery, anti-freeze, lights, and cooling system.
- Replace worn windshield wipers and fill up washer fluid.
- Have an emergency kit in every vehicle; include essentials like a blanket, flashlight, cell phone charger, and shovel.

## Focus on tires

Proper tire care should be part of every driver's vehicle maintenance routine and can help prevent breakdowns and crashes. Tires are one of the most important safety features on a vehicle.

"Your safety and the safety of others depends on the effectiveness of the four tires of a vehicle," Superintendent Carnahan said. "The tire tread keeps a vehicle from slipping and sliding in wet or icy weather, so it's essential to take care of your tires."

It's recommended to check tires and spares monthly for:

- **Pressure:** Fill each tire to the manufacturer's recommendation to improve gas mileage and help tires last longer.
- **Tread:** Depth should be at least 2/32 inch in every major tire groove.
  - o Replace when you can see President Lincoln's head if you insert a penny in the tread.
- **Damage:** Repair cuts, bumps, or cracks as needed.

## Visibility in winter conditions

Before heading out in active weather, keep visibility in mind. State law requires drivers to turn on their vehicle's low-beam headlights any time weather or other conditions make it difficult to see objects 500 feet ahead. Turning on the lights also helps ensure other drivers see your vehicle to avoid crashes.

Clear snow and ice from windows, lights, the roof, and hood. It's required by law and keeps everyone on the road safer. Snow and ice sliding off the roof or blowing off the hood can be dangerous to other vehicles. Icy windshields can limit visibility and lead to crashes.

Last season, winter weather contributed to more than 15,000 crashes that killed 38 people in Wisconsin. Review the State Patrol's [December Law of the Month](#) for tips

on winter driving safety.

View the January Law of the Month video and news release  
online: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/law/lom.aspx>