



## **Toolbox Talk: Safe Driving for Winter Conditions**

### **Introduction/Overview:**

Virginia is a sizable state, and the climate varies depending on your location. [The Farmers' Almanac](#) predicts winter 2020 will have frosty temps and above average amounts of snow. Cold weather and precipitation can add up to treacherous road conditions; throw in fog or darkness, and you have a recipe for disaster. On December 23, 2019, just outside of Williamsburg, VA, a [69-car pile-up](#) closed down Interstate 64 for hours as first responders picked their way through mangled vehicles to extract the injured. The significant factors in the accident were fog and an icy roadway.

### **Statistics:**

According to the Federal Highway Administration, over [1,300 people are killed](#) and more than 116,800 people are injured in vehicle crashes on snowy, slushy, or icy pavement annually. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says that [seventeen percent](#) of all vehicle crashes occur during winter conditions. During slippery road conditions, the [American Automobile Association](#) says to increase the normal three to four seconds following distance between you and the car ahead to five to six seconds.

### **Talking Points:**

#### Ready your vehicle:

Have your car serviced for winter driving.

Ensure tires are properly inflated

Ensure tires have at least [6/32"](#) tread depth for winter driving.

Make sure your wiper blades don't streak.

Make sure the heater and defroster are working.

Ensure headlights, brake lights, and turn signals are working.

Keep a winter driving kit in your car: Bag of abrasive material (sand or cat litter), ice scraper, cloth or paper towels, small snow shovel, booster cables, snowbrush, blanket, flashlight, warning triangles.

Clear all windows of snow and ice.

Remove snow from the roof, hood, and trunk.

#### Ready yourself:

Know your vehicle.

Developed by:

Front-wheel drive vehicles may push straight ahead.

Rear-wheel drive vehicles may cause the car's back to slide around.

Non-ABS brakes: pump the pedal to keep the tires from losing traction

ABS brakes: apply firm, steady pressure.

Practice starting, stopping, and turning in a safe and open area.

While driving:

Slow down.

Allow greater stopping distance between you and the car ahead.

Smooth and steady, no sudden movements.

Turn your headlights on. Virginia law requires you to have your headlights on when using your windshield wipers.

**Additional Discussion Notes:**

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**Final Thoughts:**

Staying indoors when the weather turns terrible is the safest thing you can do. It is best to put off the drive until road and weather conditions improve. However, if you must venture out, be extra cautious. Drive defensively.

**NOTE:** Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

**Johnny Nugent**

Risk Management Specialist

[johnny.nugent@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:johnny.nugent@dhrm.virginia.gov)

804-225-2168

**Lee Affholter, COSS, ASC**

Loss Control Consultant

[laffholter@linnovations.com](mailto:laffholter@linnovations.com)

757-256-3364

**Curtis H. Stacy, MESH, ASC, COHC**

Loss Control Consultant

[curtis.stacy@dhrm.virginia.gov](mailto:curtis.stacy@dhrm.virginia.gov)

434-594-8978

**References:**

Highlighted in text.