

Winter Driving Check List for Warm Weather Drivers

OK | Fix

Check Tires and Tread Depth

Tires with little to no tread are dangerous anytime and especially so in the winter. Minimum legal tread depth in Massachusetts is 4/32". Worn out tire tread makes the car very difficult to control. Other winter tires you can use are snow tires and studded tires (studded tires are legal only from November 1st through April 30th). Talk to a tire specialist.

Check Battery

Old batteries get weak in cold weather and may not produce enough electricity to start your car. If needed, replace your battery with a new one

Check Antifreeze

Make sure your antifreeze level is full and ask a service station to check to see that it will protect in the cold temperatures. Generally, antifreeze is mixed 50/50 with water.

Check Windshield Wiper Blades

Old blades leave streaks and don't clean well. Replace your windshield wiper blades at the beginning of the snow season. They make a special rubber protected winter blade.

Keep Windshield Washer Full

Driving behind vehicles can cover your windshield with salt and sand from the road. For safety's sake, use your windshield washer fluid and keep your window clean

Keep Gas Tank Full / Add Dry Gas Periodically

Moisture in the air can condense inside your gas tank and fuel line. Keep your tank full and periodically add a can of dry gas additive to the fuel. This will help by removing any water from your fuel. Almost any gas station sells dry gas.

Carry Some Salt/Sand in Trunk

In case your wheels start to spin on ice or snow and you become stuck, you can throw these under the drive wheels of your vehicle

Carry a Shovel

Avoid plastic shovels; the only thing they are good for is shoveling confetti. Instead, get a good, steel blade shovel. I recommend a "square point D-handle" shovel to keep in the trunk.

Have Jumper Cables

If your battery becomes drained (did you ever forget to shut off the headlights?) you can start your car using someone else's car battery. Connect as follows: positive terminal to positive terminal and negative terminal to negative terminal. This is also sometimes stated as black to black and red to red.

Have a Blanket

If your car breaks down in the winter and you have to wait for help, this will help keep warm until help arrives

Carry a Fully Charged Cell Phone

Make sure you have the phone numbers for AAA or a towing service in your phone. Also be sure to store any other numbers important during an emergency

Carry a Fully Charged Flashlight

Keep a flashlight in your car and put new batteries in it every winter. Test it to make sure it is in good working order.

Wash Your Car to Remove Built Up Salt and Sand

Road salt will cause your car to rust faster than if left alone. Go to a commercial carwash where the underside of your vehicle will also get a thorough washing.

Use Your Seat Belts and Car Seats

Always, always always have each passenger wear their seatbelt (it is the law) and place young children in approved car seats

See the other side of this sheet for winter driving tips

Winter Driving Tips for Warm Weather Drivers

- Let your vehicle and engine warm up before going anywhere. There are 2 reasons: 1.) It greatly reduces engine wear and 2.) It's much easier to scrape the ice and snow off the windows of a car that is warmed up. It is illegal in Massachusetts (as well as quite dangerous) to drive looking through a small cleared area of your windshield. You must be able to see through all your windows.
- Drive only as fast as is safe and that you feel safe. Pull over to let cars pass if you want to drive slowly.
- Do not step hard on either gas pedal or brakes. Be gentle. Stepping hard on the gas or brake pedal can cause your car to lose traction and slide out of control.
- If you start to slide, do not step hard on the brake pedal. This will cause you to lose control even more. Instead, turn your steering wheel in the direction you are sliding and gently pump your brakes to gradually slow down.
- On a slippery road, slow down well before you enter a curve or turn. If you drive too fast in a turn or curve in slippery conditions, your car will drive straight off the road.
- Remember that on snow or ice covered roads it takes much farther to stop your vehicle. Leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front of you and slow down your speed.
- Note: In an emergency, dial 911 from your cell phone. This will not go to a local police department but to the state police. The state police will contact the appropriate local police, fire or ambulance department. Stay on the phone until they tell you to hang up.