

## **Vehicle Winter Safety: Car Kits and Other Winter Safety Measures**

### **Car Kit Contents**

- Water. Winter weather can really slow traffic, possibly keeping you idled for hours. It's a good idea to carry some water.
- Food. Keep a few energy or protein bars with a long shelf life in your kit.
- Tools: jack, lug wrench, shovel, multitool, pocket knife
- Road maps
- Blanket/sleeping bag(s)
- Extra warm clothes, rubber boots, footwear traction devices, hat, and water resistant gloves
- Waterproof jacket with a hood and rain pants (if your jacket is not reflective, make sure to include a reflective vest)
- First aid kit (including prescription medications)
- Matches or lighter
- Battery jumper cables
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- A towel is a nicety that can be used after snow chain installation and removal, to put on the seat to keep it dry from your wet outer layers.
- Extra washer fluid
- Chains or traction tires
- HiVis equipment: flares or reflective safety triangle, reflective vest
- Something to sit or kneel on when installing chains. Snowy or icy pavement is not a comfortable surface. A small tarp or even a piece of cardboard will really help.
- A full fuel tank
- Kid items. Long road delays with bored, hungry kids can be stressful, prepare by including kid items in your kit: extra diaper, a deck of cards and some snacks
- Pet items. A water bowl, spare leash and treats will be rewarded with lots of wags.
- Emergency blanket (the silver variety can be placed on the roof of your car and is easily seen from above)

### **Before Winter:**

- Refamiliarize yourself with your vehicle's emergency kit:
  - Check flashlight/headlamp batteries, and ensure your supplies and equipment are in order.
  - Invest in reflective gear. A fluorescent safety vest with reflective strips can be bought at most big box home improvement stores.
- Inspect your chains/cables for any damage. If it has been a while since you had to use your chains/cables, practice putting them on somewhere dry, like your driveway or garage. Practice perfect by putting on your hazards and engaging the brake.
- Give your vehicle a thorough check:
  - Test and inspect your windshield wipers.
  - Fill your fluids. Add wiper fluid that includes de-icer.
  - Check your antifreeze
  - Cold air temps, wet conditions and dirty road spray make for foggy, blurry windshields. Consider using an antifogger on the inside of your windshield and water repellent on the outside.
  - Check and clean your headlights. If your lens covers are scratched, consider restoring or replacing them
  - Check your brakes and tires. Make sure you have adequate tread

- Make sure your vehicle is in top operating conditions, with clean headlights, good brakes, working windshield wipers and good tires (check your tread).
- Allow extra time to get where you're going. Travel is going to be slow. No meeting or appointment is worth your life - Arrive Alive
- Clear your full front windshield, all windows, and lights.
- Clean snow off of your vehicle, remaining snow can impede your view. Clean both the hood and the roof. *One quick stop and whatever snow is on the roof can quickly slide to cover your front windshield.*

**Before you leave:**

- Check road conditions on your route before you go at [TripCheck](#) or by dialing 511. Plan your trip accordingly. Know your limits and be prepared to curtail your travel if it becomes necessary.
- Keep the gas tank full in case you get lost, stuck in traffic or rerouted due to an accident.
- Fully charge your phone and consider keeping it plugged into the charger while driving

**If traction devices are recommended:**

- Consider chaining up before you leave home.
- If you encounter conditions that warrant traction devices while you are out and about, take great care in finding a safe area.
  - Pull off the road as far as possible on a safe shoulder.
  - Turn on your hazard lights.
  - Engage your brake.
  - Keep your car running with the heater on and roll your window down half way.
  - Put on your water resistant jacket, gloves, hat, headlamp and waterproof pants, and cardboard or mat from your vehicle's emergency kit and grab your chains/cables.
- If you hear any indication that the chain may be broken and it's hitting your car, STOP as soon as is safely possible. Chains that are flapping can wrap around a strut or shock component causing big damage to your vehicle. Listen for a loud sound of slapping, or metal on metal.

**Driving in the snow requires a certain set of driving skills that some Oregon residents rarely get to use. Here are some things to keep in mind:**

- Accelerate slowly
- Allow extra stopping distance. Consider increasing your follow distance from 3 seconds to 8 seconds. Packed snowy roads can become as slick as ice.
- Avoid using cruise control
- Brake gently to avoid skidding or sliding. If the wheels lock up, ease off the brakes.
- After you have chained/cabled your tires, avoid dry pavement if possible and keep your speed at 30 mph or less.
- Pay attention to outdoor temperatures, they can plummet quickly. Remember, bridges and overpasses freeze first.
- Slow down when approaching off-ramps, bridges and shady spots where the snow often lingers longer.
- Turn on your headlights to increase your visibility.
- If you feel tired or if road conditions get rough, don't be afraid to stop for the night.