Guide



Road Safety At Work

Winter Driving Safety for Employees

What to know before you drive on the job this winter.

Who should use this guide?

The information applies to anyone who drives full time, part time, or once in a while as part of their work duties.

Why should you use this guide?

Driving for work in winter may be the most dangerous thing you do, even if it only happens occasionally. Driving is the leading cause of traumatic work-related deaths in BC. Yet most crashes are preventable.

The risk elevates in winter due to road and weather conditions that can change quickly. No matter how much driving experience you have, this creates serious risks for you and your passengers.

This guide outlines your safety responsibilities, as well as steps you can take to reduce winter driving risks. The last page is a checklist you can keep in your vehicle as a safety reminder.

If you are uncertain about anything in the guide, talk with your supervisor and review Road Safety at Work's winter driving safety section.

Meeting your road safety responsibilities in winter

In addition to following all driving laws, you're got safety responsibilities and rights. The vehicle you use for work is considered your workplace, even if it's your personal vehicle.

You're required, for example, to help ensure that your driving doesn't result in harm to yourself or anyone else.

Your safety responsibilities don't change with the seasons. But your driving needs to. Winter brings different road and weather hazards than other times of year. To help reduce the risk of crashing, you're required to:

- Be fit to drive safely, both physically and mentally
- Know the driving-related hazards and risks you commonly encounter and how to manage them
- Know and follow your organization's procedures for winter driving
- Participate in winter-specific driver training
- Ensure any personal vehicle you use for work is safe to operate and equipped for winter conditions
- Refuse unsafe work

Download our Employee Occupational Road Safety Responsibilities Guide for an overview of your rights and responsibilities under the *Workers Compensation Act* and *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*. It suggests practical steps you can take to help meet the requirements.

How to keep yourself safe

Winter conditions in BC bring additional risks and require specific adjustments to how you drive. Here are some things you can do to help ensure you get home safe.

Drive for the conditions

Roads can go from wet to icy or bare pavement to snow-packed in a matter of minutes. Even if you've been driving for years, you can't predict how other vehicles and drivers will react.



That's why it's so important to drive for the conditions, regardless of the speed limit. Speed limits are set for ideal conditions and winter is rarely ideal.

Driving for the conditions means adjusting how you drive based on the road, weather, and traffic. Give yourself more time to react. Follow these general guidelines when conditions are poor:

- "Know before you go" by checking road and weather conditions at DriveBC.ca.
- Slow down to below the speed limit.
- Leave at least 4 seconds of space between you and the vehicle ahead.
- Turn on your headlights so you can see and be seen.
- Avoid sudden braking or sharp turns.
- Pull over if conditions are unsafe.
- Use caution when approaching highway maintenance equipment and don't pass them.

Importantly, leave your phone alone. Even a brief distraction can have fatal consequences.

Review our Driving for the Conditions Tool Kit for more tips for safely navigating winter weather.

Know driving hazards and how to manage them

Your employer is required to do a driving-related risk assessment that includes winter hazards. Your involvement is important, since you know your routes and your vehicle better than anyone. Share your experiences and suggestions.

Your employer needs to ensure you are aware of:

- The winter driving hazards you're most likely to deal with
- The risks they create
- The things you can do to reduce the risks

If you're unclear about any of them, talk with your supervisor.

Also talk with other drivers. Share near miss experiences, safety tips, and any concerns about routes such as areas with frequent icy patches or poor visibility. Report them to your supervisor too. The information can help make driving safer for everyone.

Download our Fall & Winter Driving Risk Assessment Tool and review it with your employer.

Follow your employer's driving policies, procedures

procedures Your employer is required to have rules to help keep you safe on the road. You need to understand and follow them at all times.

Make sure you know your organization's driving expectations during poor weather, including:

- When to cancel or delay travel
- How to plan a safer route
- What to do if you drive alone on trips where aid wouldn't be easily available in an emergency or you got injured or sick
- What to do if you're stranded or in a crash
- Use of your personal vehicle for work

Ask for a written copy of your organization's procedures.

Review our section for winter drivers to learn how to "read the road" for clues about hazards.

Download our Basic Trip Plan Form and fill it out when you're going to drive farther than 50 km or for more than one hour, especially if you drive alone.



Take advantage of training

Winter driving is a skill and like any skill, it needs practice — especially if you're new to driving in snow and ice. Even veteran drivers benefit from periodic refreshers since many crashes are the result of driver error.

Ask your supervisor for training and coaching in key winter driving techniques such as braking and skid recovery.

Watch our Practical BC Winter Driving Tips webinar.

Use ICBC's driving knowledge practice test to build and maintain your knowledge of road signs, driving behaviours, and the rules of the road.

Prepare yourself

New and experienced drivers alike can run into trouble. Stay humble. Conditions change fast and confidence isn't a substitute for caution.

Commit to being mentally, physically, and emotionally ready to drive in challenging conditions. If you're too fatigued to drive safely, don't get behind the wheel. Ask yourself: Am I alert and focused? Am I feeling healthy enough to handle stressful or unpredictable situations? If you answer "no" to any of these questions, talk to your supervisor before you head out.

Also think about your comfort while driving. Wear comfortable clothing that doesn't restrict your movement. Winter boots, for example, can make it hard to feel the pedals accurately and control them smoothly. Bring additional warm and/or waterproof clothing (boots, parka, gloves, and hat) in case you need to get out of your vehicle. Adjust seats and mirrors for the best visibility.

Make sure you've got the supplies you may need. Carry a charged phone and a charger. Pack water, snacks, and any personal items you may need if you're delayed or stranded.

Review our Driving for Work Tool Kit and download our Prepare Yourself for Winter Conditions Tip Sheet. Both resources suggest more steps to get you ready for a safe trip.

Prepare your vehicle

Whether you use a personal or company vehicle, do a daily pre-trip inspection. You could do a "walk around" that includes:

- Brushing off all snow and ice on the vehicle
- Looking for any damage that could affect safe operation
- Checking that all lights work, including brake lights and turn signals
- Checking tires for tread depth and proper inflation
- Making sure wiper blades are in good condition and that you have adequate windshield washer fluid
- Making sure windows and mirrors are fully defrosted and clean
- Stepping on the brake pedal. If it feels soft, spongy, or abnormal, have it checked

If you use your personal vehicle for work, inspect it and make sure it's equipped and maintained for winter conditions. Schedule pre-season maintenance that includes having:

- 4 matched winter tires with the 3-peaked mountain and snowflake symbol. Winter tires are required on most BC highways from October 1 through March 31, and until April 30 in some regions.
- A well-stocked emergency kit.
- Winter wipers and windshield washer fluid.
- Functioning heaters and defrosters.



Review our **Vehicle Inspection, Maintenance, and Selection Tool Kit**. It includes a 5-minute video demonstrating a simple pre-trip inspection, along with a form to record the information. You'll also find a checklist for stocking your vehicle emergency kit.

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Winter driving safety checklist for employees

Download and print this checklist. Then keep it in your vehicle and review it each time you get behind the wheel, before you start the engine.

Fitness to drive

- ☐ I am mentally, physically, and emotionally fit to drive safely.
- ☐ I'm not impaired by medication, alcohol, or stress.
- ☐ I have water, snacks, and a phone charger with me.
- ☐ I'm dressed comfortably and I've packed additional warm clothing.

Vehicle fitness

- ☐ I've checked tire tread and pressure.
- ☐ I've cleared snow and ice from all surfaces.
- ☐ All lights, wipers, and defrosters work.
- ☐ Brakes feel normal when pressed.
- ☐ Mirrors and windows are clean and defrosted.
- ☐ Emergency kit is stocked.

Driving for the conditions

- ☐ I've checked DriveBC.ca for road and weather conditions along my planned route.
- ☐ I'll reduce my speed below the limit according to the conditions.
- ☐ I'll leave at least 4 seconds between me and the vehicle ahead.
- ☐ I'll have my headlights on at all times.
- ☐ I'll avoid sudden braking, sharp turns, or passing snowplows.
- ☐ I'll pull over and contact my supervisor If conditions feel unsafe.

Safe driving procedures

- ☐ I have a copy of my organization's winter driving policy and have read it.
- ☐ I know when to cancel or delay a trip.
- ☐ I know the emergency and check-in procedures.
- ☐ I know what to do if I drive alone, get stranded, or crash.
- ☐ I understand how the policy applies if I use my personal vehicle.