



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Staying Safe On the Roads As The Snow Flies

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Now that winter weather has made its appearance across Central and Northern New York, motorists traveling on our roadways need to be prepared for the snow, ice and all other elements that make driving during the season hazardous. Everyone knows the unpredictability of winter weather conditions can make travel challenging for even the most experienced drivers. Not only are there fewer hours of daylight, but there is snow and ice to deal with too— often making driving conditions extra treacherous.

That's why I am recommending drivers use caution when out on our local highways and driving in the wintry weather. Here are some rules to follow that will help keep you and your passengers safe, as well as protect your fellow motorists:

Be prepared: Make sure you have a survival kit in your vehicle—it should include things like an ice scraper, snow brush, small shovel, salt or sand, a flashlight, extra gloves and other winter weather gear, a blanket, water and a non-perishable snack. Also, don't forget to always have your cell phone fully charged, so you can call for help in the event of an emergency. My winter survival kit always gives me peace of mind when traveling in poor weather conditions and one of the items I highly recommend is a solar lantern. Powered by the sun, this light is great if you find yourself stranded for a long period of time and your batteries die.

Warm up before heading out: Before setting out, make sure you warm your vehicle up and clear away snow and or ice from your windows, mirrors, lights and body of your vehicle. Snow on a vehicle can have the potential to block your view, or blow into the sightline of other motorists, putting them in an unsafe situation.

Don't rush: It's always a good idea to leave a little extra time to reach your destination in winter to avoid rushing—and avoid accidents.

Slow down: It goes without saying that you should always go slower in snowy or icy conditions. Also, be sure to leave more distance between yourself and other vehicles—which will give you more time to react if you hit a tricky spot on the roadway.

Respect plow truck operators: If you are behind a plow truck, make sure you follow at a safe distance behind them, or wait until the plow pulls off the road to pass. In addition, be sure to look out for those removing snow using shovels or snowblowers, who might be near the road

as they clear their driveways and sidewalks.

Take notice of your tires: One of the most important parts of preparing for winter driving is making sure your tires are in good condition. Bald tires will cause your vehicle to slide, and make it harder to negotiate turns.

What winter driving tips do you always follow? Do you have any items in a car survival kit you swear by? Share your suggestions with me on Facebook, at ritchie@nysenate.gov or by calling (315) 393-3024 and I'll include them in a future "Weekly Column."

Winter driving often times is dangerous, but you can make it a lot safer by following the above tips. As we prepare for another cold and snowy season, I hope you will take the steps necessary to keep our roads safe for all who travel them.