WEEK 6 FEBRUARY · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Winter Driving & Vehicle Safety

The drive to site and the moves around it are part of the job. On an icy 400-series highway or a snow-packed laydown yard, a loaded truck doesn't stop the way it does in summer. Most winter crashes come down to the same two things: too much speed for the surface, and not enough room to react.

The hazard

Ice and snow take your traction and stretch your stopping distance out. Loaded trucks and trailers skid and jackknife, and the weight behind you means you need more room than the car ahead does. Short days put more of the driving in the dark. Whiteouts and blowing snow can hide a stopped vehicle until you're on it.

What to do

- **Leave more room — enough for the conditions, not a fixed multiple.** The usual two-second gap is a minimum for good conditions. On snow, ice, poor visibility, at speed, or with a load or trailer behind you, you need considerably more. Judge it by how long it would take to stop on *this* surface, and open the gap back up when someone fills it.
- **Brake early and gently, steer smoothly.** No sudden inputs. If you start to slide, ease off and look where you want to go. Leave cruise control off on anything slick.
- Run proper winter tires on all four wheels, and clear **all** the snow and ice before you move — windows, mirrors, lights, plates, and the roof.
- **If visibility gets unsafe, get off the roadway.** Take an exit, a rest area, or another safe spot well clear of traffic. Stopping in a live lane, or on a narrow shoulder in a whiteout, puts you exactly where nobody can see you — that's how the second collision happens. Lights on, stay buckled while you wait it out.
- Keep the tank topped up and carry a kit: scraper and brush, shovel, sand or traction mats, blanket, charged phone, flashlight, and something to eat and drink.
- In tight, slippery yards, back up slowly and use a spotter. The yard is where most of the low-speed damage happens.

Watch out for

- Bridges, ramps, and shaded spots. They ice first and stay slick after the rest of the road looks fine.
- Black ice that reads as wet pavement.
- Other drivers — leave yourself room for their mistakes as well as your own.

Talk it over

- Are our work vehicles on winter tires, and is there a real kit in each one?
- If a squall closed the highway mid-drive today, where would you actually pull off — and is that somewhere out of traffic?

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