WEEK 48 MID-DECEMBER · ~5 MIN READ · ONTARIO CONSTRUCTION

Winter Driving Prep & Tire Changeover

The drive to site and the moves around the yard are part of the workday, and in winter the vehicle is the piece of equipment most likely to hurt you. Most of what keeps you safe on an icy road happens before you turn the key: the right tires, glass you can see out of, and something in the back if you get stuck.

The hazard

All-season tires stiffen and lose grip below about 7 °C, so on ice and packed snow your stopping distance stretches out — and a loaded truck or trailer needs more room again. Worn tread, low washer fluid, a weak battery, and a windshield you can barely see through all stack up against you on exactly the morning conditions turn bad. None of it announces itself: the vehicle feels fine in the driveway and then doesn't when you need it to stop.

What to do

- **Winter tires on all four wheels.** Two on the drive axle isn't enough — the ends of the vehicle grip differently and it can come around on you.
- **Set tire pressure to the vehicle's placard**, not the number on the sidewall, and check it in the cold: pressure drops as the temperature does, and low tires stop and handle worse.
- **Clear everything before you roll** — windows, mirrors, lights, roof, and plates, not a peephole. Snow left on the roof blows onto your glass or the vehicle behind you.
- **Washer fluid rated for real winter temperatures, and wipers that actually clear.** You can't drive what you can't see.
- **Carry a proper kit:** scraper and brush, shovel, sand or traction mats, blanket, warm layer, flashlight, **a charged phone, and food and water.** If you're stuck for hours, the blanket and the water are what matter.
- **Give yourself more room and more time.** Brake early and gently, and leave cruise control off on anything slick.
- **Fleet vehicles are the employer's responsibility** — tires, tread, fluids, and the kit. If a company vehicle isn't ready, that's a report, not a workaround.

Watch out for

- "I'll swap them next weekend." Once the first storm is in the forecast the shops book solid, and the weather doesn't wait for the appointment.
- Bridges, ramps, and shaded spots — they ice first and stay slick after the rest of the road looks clear.
- A short familiar drive treated as low-risk. Familiar roads get less attention, not less ice.
- A kit that's been in the truck so long nobody's checked whether the flashlight works.

Talk it over

- Are the company vehicles on winter tires, and who's confirming that this week?
- If you got stranded in a storm tonight, what's actually in the vehicle you'd be in?

- What's one thing on your vehicle you've been meaning to sort out before winter and haven't?

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