



Winter Driving

It won't be long until winter weather will be upon us. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) would like to remind you that if winter weather is forecast, eliminate all unnecessary travel. This will keep you and your family safe and allow PennDOT to more easily perform its winter duties. However, if you must travel, PennDOT offers the following tips for safe driving this winter season.

- Carry a winter emergency travel kit.
- Listen to weather and travel advisories, but if you don't have to travel in bad weather, don't.
- Keep your gas tank at least half full.
- Slow down and increase following distance.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts.
- Beware of roads that may look wet, but are actually frozen, often referred to as "black ice."
- Use extra caution on bridges and ramps, where ice can often form without warning.
- Carry a cellphone.
- Do not use cruise control while driving on snow-covered roads.
- State law requires you to turn on your headlights when your wipers are on.

IN THIS ISSUE

- Winter Driving
- Holiday Fire Safety
- Snow Squall Warnings
- ReadyPA Action Sheet: Winter Driving Safety



- Use your low beams in particularly bad weather, especially in cases of heavy or blowing snow.
- Remove ice and snow from windows, mirrors and all vehicle lights before you drive and as often as needed.
- Remove snow and ice from the hood and roof of your vehicle. State law states that if snow or ice from your vehicle strikes a vehicle or person and causes death or injury, you can be ticketed.

Winter Driving

- Do not park or abandon your vehicle on snow emergency routes.
- Do not pass or get between trucks plowing in a plow line (several trucks plowing side by side).
- Make sure someone else knows where you are going and when you expect to arrive. In case you run into an emergency and need help, someone will know where to look for you.
- If you do become stranded, it's better to stay with your vehicle until help arrives. Run the engine every hour or so, but make sure the tailpipe is clear and keep the downwind window cracked open.
- Do not drink and drive.
- Always wear your seat belt.



Remember, preparation is the key to successfully navigating winter roads. Winter weather can bring unexpected conditions, so make sure that both you and your vehicle are ready for ice and snow.

Thank you Fritzi Schreffler, Safety Press Officer, PennDOT District 8, for providing this article.



Holiday Fire Safety

The holiday season should be a joyous time of year without worrying about losing a loved one or home due to the ravages of fire. Follow these simple holiday fire safety tips so the holidays can be memorable.

CHRISTMAS TREE SAFETY TIPS

- If you cut down your own tree, as soon as you get home, place it in water and store in a cool environment until ready to display.
- Before placing the tree in a stand, cut 2" from the base of the trunk
- Ensure your tree remains well moisturized by checking the water level at least twice daily.
- Avoid placing a tree near a fireplace or furnace outlet as the heat emitted will cause the tree to dry out more rapidly.
- NEVER place lit candles on a Christmas tree.
- Make sure the tree is not blocking an exit.

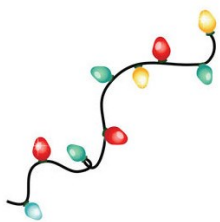


HOLIDAY LIGHTS

Did you know holiday lights are estimated to have been involved with 150 home structure fires between 2007 and 2011? Can you guess what the number one item first ignited from an electrical failure or malfunction is? The answer is wire and cable insulation due to plugging in too many strings of lights together.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS SAFETY TIPS

- Use lights that have the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords as well as loose bulb connections.
- Connect no more than three strands of mini string sets, and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Always turn off Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.



ESCAPE PLANNING

- Make an escape plan that shows two ways out of every room and have everyone practice the plan before an emergency occurs.
- Practice escaping from a fire by crawling low to the floor to the nearest exit, free of smoke and flames.
- Have everyone agree on a meeting place out-side. In an emergency, get out first and then call for help.
- Never re-enter a burning building.

Holiday Fire Safety

CANDLE FIRES

Did you know, historically twice the number of home candle fires occur during the December holiday season.

CANDLE FIRE SAFETY TIPS



- Burn candles inside a one-foot circle of safety, free of everything that can burn.
- Keep candles away from Christmas trees and flammable decorations.
- Do not place candles in windows where blinds or curtains can close over them.
- Keep wicks trimmed to 1/4 inch, and extinguish candles when they burn down to within 2 inches of the holder.

Other Winter Fire Safety Tips

- If there is a fire hydrant near your home you can assist the fire department by keeping the hydrant clear of snow and ice so in the event it is needed, it can be located.
- Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke alarm, and be sure to check and clean it every month.
- Never use a range or oven as a supplementary heating device. This is a safety hazard and can produce potentially deadly fumes.
- Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed in every home to warn of deadly build-ups.
- NEVER try to thaw frozen water pipes with a blowtorch or other open flame. The pipe could conduct the heat and ignite a fire inside a wall. Use hot water or a Underwriters Laboratories® (UL) device such as a hair dryer for thawing.
- And finally, know how to contact the fire department for any emergency.



Thank you State Fire Commissioner, Tim Solobay and Kraig Herman, Public Education Specialist from the Office of the State Fire Commissioner for providing this article.

New for 2018: Snow Squall Warnings



What is a Snow Squall?

Dangerous snow squalls can produce a quick burst of snowfall, greatly reducing visibility for motorists in a matter of seconds. These often “sneak up” on drivers on relatively clear days with dry roadway conditions. You can go from blue skies to zero visibility almost instantly as a snow squall travels across the road. Visibility loss is the primary hazard to the driver, but a slick roadway often makes it a recipe for multiple car pile-ups.

What to Look For

Starting January 3, 2018, the National Weather Service will be issuing a new *Snow Squall Warning* to alert motorists of these roadway hazards. Snow Squall Warnings will be similar to a severe thunderstorm or tornado warning, alerting of life-threatening snow squalls. These warnings will cover a small area for a short period of time, and impacted major roadways will be listed in the alert. Before traveling, check your local National Weather Service website to see if snow squalls are in the forecast so you can be alert for rapidly changing conditions. You may also consider delaying or adjusting travel plans.

Where to Get Them

Sign up for Snow Squall Warnings through your favorite weather service or application. Local media outlets, paid services, and other apps can send these alerts to your phone. Of course, you will need a safe way to receive these alerts while driving. A portable NOAA Weather Radio can be used, which sets off an alert tone and delivers a voice message of the alert.

What to Do When Alerted

If you’ve driven into a snow squall, it’s likely too late. Attempt to avoid the snow squall if possible. Pulling off at an exit, or taking an alternate, lower speed travel route is the best way to avoid a serious accident. If you do drive into a squall, avoid slamming on your brakes and reduce your speed.



Restrictions and Future Plans

The 2017-18 season is a trial year for the warnings, so the following Pennsylvania counties will not be included in the warnings for now: Berks, Bucks, Carbon, Chester, Crawford, Delaware, Erie, Lehigh, Montgomery, Monroe, Northampton, and Philadelphia. The NWS is working with agencies to send these alerts out through the Wireless Emergency Alert and Emergency Alert Systems in years to come, to better alert drivers on the hazards.

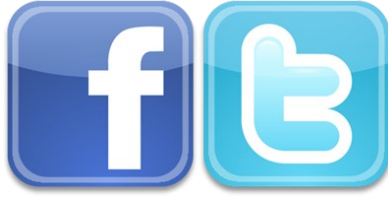
Why the Warning are Needed...

Snow squalls are one of the most immediately life threatening hazards to Pennsylvania motorists. When squalls produce whiteout conditions, drivers cannot see others around them, which often leads to dozens of cars crashing into each other, resulting in injuries, death, and vehicle damages.



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PEMA Can Also be Found on the Web!

Be Informed, Be Prepared, and Be Involved!



www.Ready.PA.gov



pennsylvania

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

www.pema.pa.gov

Preparedness Events in December

Winter Driving Safety

<http://www.penndot.gov/TravelInPA/Safety/TrafficSafetyAndDriverTopics/Pages/Winter-Driving.aspx>

Holiday Fire Safety

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/holiday.html>

Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: www.pema.pa.gov

ReadyPA: www.Ready.PA.gov

SERVPA: www.Serv.PA.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov

Office of the State Fire Commissioner: www.osfc.pa.gov

PA State Animal Response Team: www.pasart.us

PA Department of Transportation: www.penndot.gov

PA511Connect: www.511pa.com

Pennsylvania State Police: www.psp.pa.gov

8

things to keep in your car during winter



WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET STRANDED IN YOUR VEHICLE...

STAY IN YOUR VEHICLE
WHERE RESCUERS ARE
MOST LIKELY TO FIND YOU.

RUN THE HEAT 10 MIN AN HOUR
TO SAVE BATTERY POWER.

KEEP SNOW CLEAR FROM
THE EXHAUST PIPE TO
PREVENT CARBON
MONOXIDE POISONING.



Placing a Yellow Dot decal in your vehicle's rear window alerts first responders to check your glove compartment for vital information to ensure you receive proper medical attention. For more information, visit:
www.penndot.gov/TravelInPA/Pages/Yellow-Dot.aspx

THE BEST WAY TO KNOW ABOUT ROAD CONDITIONS...

511PA has a mobile application you can use for active PennDOT and PA. Turnpike advisories. Customize your alerts by type, distance and frequency based on your location. Best of all, you don't need to touch or read your phone - just listen for the travel alerts while you focus on driving.

Visit <http://www.511pa.com/mobileApp.aspx>



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