



Pennington County Emergency Management

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PRESS RELEASE

Thursday, October 6, 2011-RAPID CITY, SD & PENNINGTON COUNTY

Severe Weather Preparedness and Winter Driving Safety

Pennington County has experienced a warmer than usual fall. It's easy to forget that winter is just around the corner and our weather changes can come on extremely fast. These are just a few reminders to keep in mind.

- **Pay attention to weather reports in your area.** If snow or ice is predicted, make plans to leave early or arrive later. An alarm clock set to an earlier time can be a good friend in helping you avoid difficulties. Know your route and keep informed of weather conditions. Make a list of Dept. of Transportation road-condition hotlines.
- **Pack a winter travel safety kit.** Include a cell phone, an ice scraper and brush, tow rope, bag of sand and shovel (for use as a traction aid), blankets, flashlight, portable weather radio and a can of de-icer.
- **Keep your tires in good condition and properly inflated.** Cold weather reduces tire pressure, so check and adjust frequently. Tire tread depth should be at least 1/8-inch. Carry traction-control devices like snow chains whenever you know you'll be in a snowy area.
- **If you can move a night trip to daylight hours, do so.** Not only is visibility better, but if your vehicle is stalled, you are more likely to receive prompt assistance during the daytime.
- **Keep your gas tank at least half-full.** The extra volume can help reduce moisture problems within your fuel system. It also adds helpful weight to your vehicle.
- **Slow Down.** A good rule of thumb is to reduce speed by 50 percent in snowy conditions. Blasting through snowdrifts is hard on your vehicle. *Equally important:* Don't go too slow. Your car needs momentum to keep moving through snow on grades.
- **Keep a light touch on the controls.** Smooth operation is the key to keeping control in slippery situations. Nervousness can lead to a hard clench of the steering wheel, which can result in loss of control. Consciously loosen your grasp or stretch out your fingers from time to time to help prevent the white-knuckled grip.
- **Know how to recover from skids.** When braking on a slippery road, it's all too easy to "lock up" your wheels by stepping on the brakes a little too hard. If you start to skid, steer the vehicle gently in the direction you want the front of your vehicle to go and don't touch your brakes.
- **If you get stuck, stay in your vehicle.** Stay warm and wait for assistance. Make sure that your exhaust pipe is clear of any obstructions, including snow and ice; if you don't, carbon monoxide gas can build up inside the vehicle. Turn on the interior light at night. It will help make your vehicle more visible to rescue and work crews.