

WINTER DRIVING

If you don't have to drive--don't! But if you must, drive defensively and smart.

Before beginning your trip, know the current road conditions. Call 1.800.226.7623 or go to the Montana DOT site <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/>

Be alert for potential driving hazards including downed branches, trees, electric lines and icy areas, such as shady spots and bridges.

Leave early enough to allow extra time to get to your driving destination.

Slow down. Triple the usual distance between your car and the one ahead.

Stay in the plowed lane; avoid driving over the ridges between the plowed areas. If you must switch lanes, slow down, signal and move over slowly.

Don't pass a snowplow or spreader unless it is absolutely necessary.

Don't park along the street. Snowplow drivers can't fully clear a road if cars are in their way.

If you skid, steer into the skid. If the back of your car is skidding to the left, for example, turn the steering wheel to the left.

Don't pump your brakes, and avoid locking them up. If your brakes lock, take your foot off the brake pedal for a moment.

If you're involved in a fender-bender, move the cars out of the lanes of travel.

Keep an emergency, winter driving kit with a blanket and flashlight in the car.

While driving, keep your headlights on. Keep snow and ice off your mirrors, windows and lights.

As always, wear your seatbelts.

If your vehicle has an Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and you must brake, be sure to press the brake pedal down and hold it in place.

“Safety Always, Anywhere, Anytime”

HOLIDAY SEASON SAFETY

The following suggestions are offered to you and yours to help make your holiday season merry and safe.

Fireplaces: You should not try to burn evergreens or wreaths in the fireplace or in a wood stove to dispose of them. They are likely to flare out of control and send flames and smoke into the room. Also, do not burn wrapping paper in the fireplace because it often contains metallic materials which can be toxic if burned.

Candles: Never use lighted candles near trees, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.

Toys and Gifts: Be especially careful when you choose toys for infants or small children. Be sure anything you give them is too big to get caught in the throat, nose or ears. Avoid toys with small parts that can be pulled or broken off. If you are giving toys to several children in one family, consider their age differences and the chances that younger children will want to play with older kids' toys.

Older adults: Select gifts for older adults that are not heavy or awkward to handle. For persons with arthritis, make sure the gift does not require assembly and can be easily opened and closed. Choose books with large type for anyone with vision impairment.

Plants: Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat. But many plants can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: poinsettia, mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach.

Food and Cooking: The holidays often mean preparing large meals for family and friends. Wash hands, utensils, sink, and anything else that has come in contact with raw poultry. Keep in mind that a stuffed bird takes longer to cook. For questions concerning holiday turkey preparation and cooking call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-800-535-4555. Refrigerate, or freeze leftovers in covered shallow containers (less than two inches deep) within two hours after cooking. Date the leftovers for future use.

Alcohol, Parties and Driving: Being a smart party host or guest should include being sensible about alcoholic drinks. More than half of all traffic fatalities are alcohol-related. Use designated drivers, people who do not drink, to drive other guests home after a holiday party.

Stress: The holiday season is one of the most stressful times of the year. You can't avoid stress completely, but you can give yourself some relief. Allow enough time to shop rather than hurry through stores and parking lots. Only plan to do a reasonable number of errands. When shopping, make several trips out to the car to drop off packages rather than trying to carry too many items. Take time out for yourself. Relax, read, or enjoy your favorite hobby at your own pace.

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