

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 <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 a few minutes early to allow extra time to get to your 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 car has an Anti-lock Braking System (ABS) and you must brake, be sure to press the brake pedal and hold it in place.