Topic: Driver Safety in Winter

Fair or foul weather driving always presents hazards. But winter months present drivers with conditions that are far different from those they face during the rest of the year.

Brakes:

- **Know your brakes:** When your brakes lock up on wet and slippery roads or during a panic stop, you lose steering control and your vehicle can spin.
- **Anti-Lock Braking Systems (ABS):** In vehicles equipped with ABS, the driver's foot remains firmly on the brake pedal, allowing the system to automatically pump the brakes. Rear wheel ABS prevents wheel lockup so your car stays in a straight line. If your car has ABS control on all four wheels, you also keep steering control. If you have steering control, it is possible to avoid a crash by steering around hazards if a complete stop cannot be accomplished in time.
- **Get the feel of the road:** While braking or accelerating, do so gently. Be aware of how slippery the road is and adjust your speed accordingly. Rising temperatures greatly increase the slipperiness of ice and snow.
- **Brake before curves:** All vehicles are particularly sensitive to over-powering and over-braking on curves. Unseen hazards around the bend may require an evasive action, so turn your steering wheel slowly and smoothly, keep a constant speed in the turn, and pump your brakes carefully if it's necessary to slow down or stop.
- **Stretch your "following" distance:** Knowing that winter surfaces increase stopping distance three to 12 times, the smart driver increases their normal dry road following distance. Heavy trucks require a longer stopping distance on slippery roads than passenger cars. Remember… don't tailgate.

Tires:

- **Make sure you have the right tires:** Tires with deep treads are essential for safe cornering and handling on slippery roads. Check the air pressure frequently to maintain the manufacturer's recommended pressure.

Visibility:

- **Be able to see and be seen:** Clean all the snow and ice off of your windshield, other windows, outside mirrors, lights, and reflectors.
- **Make sure your vehicle is equipped with good wipers:** Check that wiper arms exert enough pressure on the blades to ensure a clean sweep. If moisture or ice builds up on the inside or outside of your windshield, stop and clean it off.

Lights:

- **Use proper lights:** Never drive with parking lights instead of headlights during late winter afternoons or in the early evening. Parking lights can cause an oncoming driver to
think you are farther away than you are. Keep headlights clean; dirty headlights can greatly reduce your long-distance vision at night.

_Lastly, assure that you and your vehicle are prepared for winter weather with emergency gear and proper tires, chains, and programmed vehicle maintenance._
Tires:

- **Make sure you have the right tires:**
  Tires with deep treads are essential for safe cornering and handling on slippery roads. Check the air pressure frequently to maintain the manufacturer’s recommended pressure.

Visibility:

- **Be able to see and be seen:** Clean all the snow and ice off of your windshield, other windows, outside mirrors, lights, and reflectors.
- **Make sure your vehicle is equipped with good wipers:** Check that wiper arms exert enough pressure on the blades to ensure a clean sweep. If moisture or ice builds up on the inside or outside of your windshield, stop and clean it off.

Lights:

- **Use proper lights:** Never drive with parking lights instead of headlights during late winter afternoons or in the early evening. Parking lights can cause an oncoming driver to think you are farther away than you are. Keep headlights clean; dirty headlights can greatly reduce your long-distance vision at night.

Lastly, assure that you and your vehicle are prepared for winter weather with emergency gear and proper tires, chains, and excellent vehicle maintenance.