Winter Driving in Wisconsin

Winter Facts

- Typically there are around 20,000 vehicle accidents in Wisconsin during winter months when roads are covered with ice, snow or slush.

- On average in Wisconsin, about 75 people are killed and 7,000 people are injured each winter season in accidents when roads are ice, snow or slush covered.

- Many crashes are caused by "driving too fast for current conditions." Also when the first blast of winter arrives, motorists often need to "re-learn" how to drive in slippery conditions.

- Heavy rains and snowmelt in late winter or early spring can result in flooded roads. *Turn Around—Don't Drown*[@]*!*

Winter Driving

Plan your travels and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm. You can find out the latest road conditions by going to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation travel information website at http://www.511wi.gov or call 511.

It is also important to check and winterize your vehicles before the winter season begins. Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines. Carry a winter storm survival kit in your vehicle that includes:

- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First-Aid Kit
- Shovel, tools, booster cables and windshield scraper
- High-calorie non-perishable food
- Sand or cat litter to use for traction

National Weather Service
Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Keep Safe - Stay Informed

The National Weather Service (NWS) issues storm warning and watches. Here's what they mean and what you should do.

Winter Storm Watch— Winter storm conditions (heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain) are possible within the next 36-48 hours. Continue monitoring the weather forecast.

Winter Storm or Ice Storm Warning – A significant winter event is occurring or will begin in the next 24 hours. The combination of snow, sleet, freezing rain, and moderate winds will impact travel and outdoor activities. An Ice Storm Warning is issued when mostly freezing rain is expected with ice accumulations of ¼ inch or more within a 12-hour period. Take necessary precautions—consider canceling travel plans.

Blizzard Warning– A dangerous event that has winds that are 35 mph or greater in combination with falling and/or blowing snow that reduces visibility to 1/4 mile or less for a duration of at least 3 hours.

What is possible- residents can expect almost anything - ranging from killer dense fog and flooding rains to widespread heavy snows and blizzards that can isolate a village/city for days. The only month without a tornado in Wisconsin is February! Be ready!

Wisconsin Winter Weather Facts – *National Weather Service*

- The coldest temperature in the winter of 2008-09 was -40 at Mondovi (Buffalo Co.) on January 17, 2009.

- Hurley (Iron Co.) had the most snow with 153 inches in the winter of 2008-09, while Chippewa Falls (Chippewa Co.) had the least with 33.0 inches. Many locations in southern Wisconsin, in the winter of 2007-08, set new, all-time seasonal snowfall records (200-240% of normal), and West Allis (Milwaukee Co.) received 122.1 inches!

- Wisconsin's all-time, lowest temperature is -55 F on February 2 & 4, 1996, near Couderay (Sawyer Co.). Readings of -30 F or colder have been recorded in every month from November through April. Of course, brief readings in the 50's, 60's and 70's are possible during winter as well!

- Average annual snowfall ranges from 35 to 40 inches near the Illinois border to 135 to 165 inches in the Iron County snow-belt from Gurney to Hurley.

Official snowfall records:
- Greatest daily total - Neillsville, 26.0 inches of snow on Dec 27, 1904.
- Greatest single storm total - Superior, 31.0 inches Oct 31-Nov. 2, 1991.
- Greatest monthly total - Hurley, 103.5 inches Jan. 1997.
- Greatest seasonal total - Hurley, 301.8 inches in 1996-97 winter season.
- Deepest snow on ground (excluding drifts) - Hurley, 60.0 inches on Jan. 30, 1996.

Keep Warm and Safe

Frostbite is damage to body tissue caused by extreme cold. A wind chill around –20˚ Fahrenheit (F) could cause frostbite in just 15 minutes or less. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, ear tips or the tip of the nose. If symptoms are detected—Seek medical care immediately!

Hypothermia is a condition that develops when the body temperature drops below 95˚F. It is very deadly. Warning signs include uncontrollable shivering, disorientation, slurred speech and drowsiness. Seek medical care immediately!

Overexertion is dangerous. Cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a car can bring on a heart attack or make an existing medical condition worse.

Pets also need extra care when the temperatures fall. They should be brought inside when the temperature reaches 30˚ with wind chill. Dogs and cats can get frost bitten ears, nose and feet if left outside during bitter cold weather. Chemicals used to melt snow and ice can also irritate pets' paws and be sure to keep anti-freeze, salt and other poisons away from pets as well.

Be Prepared

Some of the dangers associated with winter storms include loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies. To help protect your family now is the time to put together a disaster supply kit. Here are some items to include:

- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio and a commercial radio
- Non-perishable food that requires no cooking and bottled water
- First-aid supplies
- Fire extinguisher, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector
- If appropriate, extra medications and baby items
- If you have an emergency heating source, such as a fireplace or space heater -- make sure you have proper ventilation
- Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter

For additional information, contact your county emergency management office, the National Weather Service or Wisconsin Emergency Management at 608-242-3232. Winter safety tips along with developing your own personal preparedness plan and an emergency kit can also be found at the following websites:

www.weather.gov
http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov

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