



# BIE SAFETY ADVISOR



## Winter Weather Preventing Injury during Winter Storms

In addition to cold stress, there are other hazards that workers may be exposed to when driving in the snow.

### Winter Driving

Although employers cannot control roadway conditions, they can promote safe driving behavior by ensuring workers: recognize the hazards of winter weather driving, for example, driving on snow/ice covered roads; are properly trained for driving in winter weather conditions; and are licensed (as applicable) for the vehicles they operate.

Employers should set and enforce driver safety policies. Employers should also implement an effective maintenance program for all vehicles and mechanized equipment that workers are required to operate. Crashes can be avoided.

Employers should ensure properly trained workers' inspect the following vehicle systems to determine if they are working properly:

- **Brakes:** Brakes should provide even and balanced braking. Also check that brake fluid is at the proper level.
- **Cooling System:** Ensure a proper mixture of 50/50 antifreeze and water in the cooling system at the proper level.
- **Electrical System:** Check the ignition system and make sure that the battery is fully charged and that the connections are clean. Check that the alternator belt is in good condition with proper tension.
- **Engine:** Inspect all engine systems.
- **Exhaust System:** Check exhaust for leaks and that all clamps and hangers are snug.
- **Tires:** Check for proper tread depth and no signs of damage or uneven wear. Check for proper tire inflation.
- **Oil:** Check that oil is at proper level.
- **Visibility Systems:** Inspect all exterior lights, defrosters (windshield and rear window), and wipers. Install winter windshield wipers.

An emergency kit with the following items is recommended in vehicles:

- Cellphone or two-way radio
- Windshield ice scraper
- Snow brush
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Shovel
- Tow chain
- Traction aids (bag of sand or cat litter)
- Emergency flares
- Jumper cables
- Snacks
- Water
- Road maps
- Blankets, change of clothes

### Stranded in a Vehicle

If you are stranded in a vehicle, stay in the vehicle. Call for emergency assistance if needed, response time may be slow in severe winter weather conditions. Notify your supervisor of your situation. Do not leave the vehicle to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards. You may become disoriented and get lost in blowing and drifting snow. Display a trouble sign by hanging a brightly colored cloth on the vehicle's radio antenna and raising the hood. Turn on the vehicle's engine for about 10 minutes each hour and run the heat to keep warm. Also, turn on the vehicle's dome light when the vehicle is running as an additional signal. Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning. Keep the exhaust pipe clear of snow and open a downwind window slightly for ventilation.

Watch for signs of **frostbite** and **hypothermia**. Do minor exercises to maintain good blood circulation in your body. Clap hands and move arms and legs occasionally. Try not to stay in one position for too long. Stay awake, you will be less vulnerable to cold-related health problems. Use blankets, newspapers, maps, and even the removable car mats for added insulation. Avoid overexertion since cold weather puts an added strain on the heart. Unaccustomed exercise such as shoveling snow or pushing a vehicle can bring on a heart attack or make other medical conditions worse.



## Monthly Toolbox Talk

You may not know the name for it, but if you drive at night, you've probably experienced situational night blindness. It can occur when you are temporarily blinded by a bright light such as an oncoming car's headlights.

When you're momentarily blinded by a bright light, your pupils contract and adjust to the sudden light intensification. Then, when the light passes, your pupils readjust to the subsequent lower light level by dilating.

The issue? During the brief time your eyes are making these adjustments, your vision is impaired. Without enough light, we lose much of our contrast sensitivity (the ability to distinguish objects from the background) and peripheral vision (the ability to recognize objects at the edges of our visual field).

To help you navigate nighttime driving, follow these tips:

- Drive within the visual range illuminated by your headlights, not by what you think you see beyond them. At night, headlights limit our view to only 250 to 350 feet of the road ahead.
- Adjust your rearview mirror to the nighttime setting to dim any headlight glare coming from behind.
- Focus your eyes on the right edge of the road to avoid being blinded.
- Keep your windshield and headlights clean inside and out.
- Shift your view between the road and your vehicle's rear and side mirrors.
- Turn your head from side to side to increase your peripheral vision.
- Use high beams when you can.

