Winter Weather Driving – Landscaping Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Whether transporting equipment, traveling between job sites, or responding to emergency calls, winter driving requires extra caution and preparation. Accidents on icy or snow-covered roads can lead to serious injuries.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

The dangers associated with winter driving in landscaping are significant and varied.

Specific Risks:

1. **Slippery Roads:**

- **Ice and Black Ice:** Ice and black ice (a thin, transparent layer of ice that is difficult to see) can make roads extremely slippery, leading to loss of control, skidding, and accidents.
- **Snow-Covered Roads:** Snow can reduce traction and make it difficult to stop or steer.

1. **Reduced Visibility:**

- **Blizzards and Snowstorms:** Heavy snowfall and blizzards can drastically reduce visibility.
- **Fog and Frost:** Cold temperatures cause fog and frost to form on windshields impairing visibility.

1. **Cold Weather Hazards:**

- **Mechanical Failures:** Cold weather can cause mechanical issues, such as battery failure, frozen fuel lines, or tire pressure drops, which can lead to breakdowns or accidents.
- **Driver Fatigue:** Long hours on the road in challenging conditions can lead to driver fatigue.

1. **Hazardous Road Conditions:**

- **Snowdrifts**: Accumulated snow on the sides of roads can form snowdrifts, which can block lanes, hide obstacles, or cause vehicles to become stuck.
- **Potholes and Debris:** Snow and ice can conceal potholes, debris, or other road hazards.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

How to protect yourself and others when driving in winter conditions:

Before You Drive

1. **Vehicle Preparation**

- **Winterize Your Vehicle:** Ensure your vehicle is prepared for winter by checking the battery, antifreeze levels, brakes, and tire pressure. Use winter tires that provide better traction.
- **Windshield and Lights:** Make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition and that you have plenty of windshield washer fluid rated for cold temperatures. Clean your headlights and, taillights.

1. **Plan Your Route**

- **Check the Weather:** Before setting out, check the weather forecast and road conditions.
- **Know Your Route:** Plan your route in advance, taking into account the safest roads. Avoid routes with steep inclines or sharp turns that may be more dangerous in icy conditions.

1. **Emergency Preparedness**

- **Emergency Kit:** Keep an emergency kit in your vehicle that has blankets, a flashlight, a first-aid kit, a shovel, ice scraper, extra windshield washer fluid, and non-perishable snacks.
- **Cell Phone and Charger:** Ensure your cell phone is fully charged before leaving.

While You Drive

1. **Adjust Your Speed:**

- **Slow Down:** Reduce your speed to match road conditions.
- **Increase Following Distance:** Increase the distance between your vehicle and the car in front.

1. **Driving Techniques**

- **Steer and Brake Gently:** Avoid sudden movements when steering or braking, as these can cause your vehicle to skid. Apply brakes gently and steer smoothly to maintain control.
- **Use Low Beams in Fog:** If you encounter fog, use your low-beam headlights.
- **Avoid Cruise Control:** Do not use cruise control in snowy or icy conditions.

1. **Stay Focused and Alert**

- **Stay Alert:** Pay close attention to the road, other drivers, and changing weather conditions.
- **Watch for Black Ice:** Be especially cautious on bridges, overpasses, and shaded areas where black ice is more likely to form.

If You Get Stuck or Encounter an Emergency

1. **Remain Calm and Stay with Your Vehicle**

- **Stay with Your Vehicle:** If you get stuck in snow, it’s usually safer to stay with your vehicle.
- **Signal for Help:** Use your hazard lights or place a brightly colored cloth on your antenna or door handle to signal for help.

1. **Freeing Your Vehicle**

- **Clear Snow from Around Tires:** Use a shovel to clear snow from around your tires.
- **Use Sand or Kitty Litter:** Spread sand or kitty litter in front of your tires to help gain traction on ice.

Training and Awareness

1. **Winter Driving Training and Refresher Courses**

- **Driver Training:** Employers should provide training for workers who drive in winter conditions and conduct refresher courses at the start of each winter season.

1. **Promote a Safety Culture**

- **Encourage Safe Practices:** Encourage all workers to prioritize safety over speed.
- **Lead by Example**: Supervisors and experienced drivers should model safe winter driving practices.

FINAL WORD

By taking the time to winterize your vehicle, adjusting your driving habits, and staying prepared for emergencies, you can protect yourself and others on the road.