

Naval Safety Center Offers Winter Driving Tips

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NORFOLK, Va. - January 2, 2020 - Winter weather is here, and there will be a significant increase in traffic as people travel to various destinations to spend the holidays with family and friends. During this time of the year, the Naval Safety Center (NAVSAFECEN) reminds travelers to practice deliberate consideration of safety in winter conditions and practice overall risk management when operating a motor vehicle.

Drivers should plan to get plenty of sleep, ideally between 6-8 hours before a road trip. If you become drowsy or start to fall asleep while driving, take a break. Pull over in a safe location where you can get some rest. Drowsy driving can be as dangerous as driving under the influence.

It is also important to share the details of road trips with family members or friends. This information sharing includes when you are leaving for a trip, your intended route, and the approximate length of time to destination.

"Before heading out for long road trips, Sailors and Marines need to plan a driving route with rest stops every two hours," said Keith Wilson, a Safety and Occupational Health manager in the NAVSAFECEN Shore Directorate. "Look at the route's extended weather forecast and be sure to allow extra driving time if foul weather is expected. If caught in bad weather, slow down and increase driving distance in between cars if possible. Be on the lookout for other drivers that may be driving recklessly."

While practicing increased situational awareness of road conditions during winter months, it is equally important to ensure your vehicle's maintenance is up-to-date and all parts are in good working condition. In addition to your annual vehicle maintenance, winterize your car for dropping temperatures and messy road conditions.

The following tips from the National Safety Council will aid in preparing for winter roads:

- Test your battery; battery power drops as the temperature drops.
- Make sure the cooling system is in good working order.
- Have winter tires with a deeper, more flexible tread placed on your car.
- If using all-season tires, check the tread and replace them if it is less than 2/32 of an inch.
- Check the tire pressure; tire pressure drops as the temperature drops.
- Check your wiper blades and replace them if needed.
- Add wiper fluid rated for -30 degrees.
- Keep your gas tank at least half-full to avoid gas line freeze.

In addition to maintenance and winterization, there are additional precautions before hitting the roads in frigid weather, such as warming up the car before driving. While it is warming up, take this opportunity to clean the external windows, cameras and side-view mirrors to provide for better visibility around the vehicle. Remove dirt, ice and snow from sensors to allow assistive driving features like automatic emergency braking to work effectively.

"Create an emergency kit for your car. Include a blanket, first aid kit, water, granola bars, a flashlight, reflective triangle or flares and a small bag of sand in case you get stuck on ice," said Wilson. "If driving into colder weather, be aware that shaded areas and bridges may have ice on them even though the roads are clear."

Fleet readiness begins with following these tips and practicing good risk mitigation both on and off-duty.

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