

Winter Weather Danger Zones Require Special Attention

Sharpening your skill in managing the brake, accelerator and steering wheel is critical for safe winter driving.

Intersections:

Even a fraction of an inch of snow can turn intersections into crash zones. Slow down before approaching an intersection. Scan left and right for pedestrians and cars on cross streets. If you're having trouble stopping, they probably will, too.

Prepare for drivers sliding into intersections from the side, and get ready to make a decision: Can you proceed safely through the intersection, or should you stop to avoid a collision with an oncoming vehicle?

After a stop, press the accelerator slowly to get going again. With manual transmission, start in second gear to reduce wheel spin. If you have an automatic equipped with second-gear start, use it.

Hills:

When approaching an icy hill, pick a path that will allow the most traction.

Watch the cars ahead of you, and steer clear of spots where they spin their wheels or slide backward. Instead head for unpacked snow or powder, where you'll get a better grip.

Build speed gradually while you're still on the level ground. If you have shift-on-the-fly four-wheel drive, shift into it before you reach the hill. After you've reached the crest, begin your descent slowly, shifting into a lower gear to allow engine drag (rather than brakes) to reduce your speed.

Curves:

To maintain control, you must reduce speed before you enter an icy curve.

Any sudden acceleration or deceleration while you're turning will send you into a skid.

Controlled speed and smooth steering and braking will help prevent skidding on an icy turn. If your wheels lose grip, gradually release the pressure from whichever pedal you're using (either the brake or accelerator). Then, smoothly steer in the direction you want the car to go. Smooth steering is essential in recovering from a skid.

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