



It's Time to Winterize Your Fleet!

No matter how much we hate it, winter is rapidly approaching. This means that it is already time to begin reviewing our driving techniques and preparing ourselves for the changes that we will need to make in response to the adverse conditions.

The first thing to remember is that others don't! Every year, the average driver must slide through at least one traffic light or stop sign before he/she remembers to slow down and begin stopping well in advance of the intersection. If you are not prepared, someone will slide into your path and another collision will inevitably go into the books. Don't let others control your driving record! Take charge of the road!

Winter Driving Tips for Commercial Truck Drivers

The best strategy for winter driving is caution. As you start get the feel of the road - ease into the throttle to determine traction - brake and turn gently. Leave plenty of following distance and avoid unnecessary passing.

TRACTION AND BRAKING ON ICE

A tractor's braking distance is 4 to 10 times greater on ice than on dry road. To compensate for slippery surfaces, reduce the speed to a third of the posted one.

BRIDGES AND OVERPASSES

Ice forms more quickly and stays longer on bridges and overpasses. Anticipate icy conditions before you reach a bridge or overpass - slow down and use extra caution.

SHADY SPOTS

Be alert for shady spots on the road, where ice may still be present after the rest of the road is clear.

BLACK ICE

Ice on the open road can be difficult to see. It may be under snow or invisible (black ice). Check for black ice by watching the vehicle ahead. If there is no tire spray - *watch out!*

EXIT RAMPS

Exit ramps present a special winter hazard, as they may not be traveled frequently and can freeze over rapidly. Curved and sloped exit ramps are particularly dangerous under slippery conditions. Even during the best road conditions, the posted exit ramp speed is most likely too fast for your vehicle, so *slow down!*

INTERSECTIONS

Reduce your speed and be prepared to stop at intersections, even if you have the right of way.

Watch for approaching traffic, evaluate their speed, and then exercise your professionalism by stopping or slowing to avoid them. Do not swerve in the direction of their travel. If you do, a collision will be inevitable. Instead, maintain your lane, or if safe to do so, swerve so that you will be where they have been -- not where they are going.

Slippery, icy or otherwise wet roads present a safety hazard to truckers, as well as, to everyone else on the road. Stop times take longer, maneuvering becomes more difficult and visibility is substantially reduced. Potholes, road work and uneven pavement can also make it difficult for tractor-trailer drivers to control multiple tons of freight. *Slow down*, when less than ideal conditions are present.

Also, *never forget*, that while other drivers may not show courtesy, *you must!* With more than 80,000 pounds of truck and freight under your control, you can do your part to ensure that your truck, your goods and you, yourself, arrive safely at your final destination.

Fleet Equipment

TRACTOR COLD WEATHER CHECKLIST

This checklist should be performed by mid- to late October, prior to the start of the winter season, in addition to the regular *Preventative Maintenance Schedule*.

COOLANT SYSTEM

- Check antifreeze strength for adequate protections (-30F degrees).
- Check coolant treatment additives or water filter.
- Pressure test cooling system at 15 psi to 18 psi after turning on the heater control valves. The best result is obtained when testing a cold engine.
- Pressure test radiator cap at a minimum pressure of 5 psi.
- Carefully check all heater and water hoses for wear, cracks, hardening, or softening. Tighten any loose hose clamps.

CAB HEATING SYSTEMS

- Clean out heater screens (filters) and check for any heater core obstructions.
- Check heater motor and controls for proper function.

AIR SYSTEMS

- Drain all air tanks "daily", when the temperature is above freezing. Contact shop if oil is present in drain water, as this could be a sign of a bad air compressor.
- Service air dryer per manufacturers' specifications. On some air dryers, depending on type and manufacturer, the filter cartridge (desiccant) should be changed every one to three years.
- Check Air Dryer heater operations. If the element is cold, 4-5 amp draw is normal.

BATTERIES AND ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- Disconnect battery cables and load test each battery. Record ambient temperature, print test results and attach to the winterization inspection form.
- Check all connections. If needed, clean/tighten the batteries and starter connections.
- Check condition of alternator belt. Test charging system print-out results and attach to winterization form.

STARTING AIDS

- Check condition of the block heater with an ohm meter. 10 to 15 ohm element resistance is normal for a 1000 to 1500 watt heater. Do also check the condition of electrical cord and plug.
- Inspect the fuel heater and maintain per manufacturer service recommendations.
- Check fuel water separator. At most, collect the water at bottom with a drain valve. Always drain during the winter when the temperature is above freezing and change the filter per the separator's recommendations and before the winter months.
- Drain the water from the fuel tank sumps before the air temperature drops below freezing (32 F).

GENERAL

- Check operation of windshield washers and ensure that the wipers blades remove solution without streaking. Change as needed.
- Check windshield washer reservoir for proper type and amount of solution.
- Clean and grease all electrical connections to the following: Headlights, tail lights, light, cord, lift gate and receptacle. Charge the receptacle and clearance lights, and make sure to only use approved dielectric grease.
- Check for excessive fan free play with engine shut off and clutch released.
- Check 5th wheel assemblies, ensure sliders move freely and clean off excessive dirt and grease build up.
- Check all oil levels and any signs of water contamination.
- Lubricate all door hinges, latches and locks.

FINAL CHECK

- With the engine at its normal operating temperature, the idle speed check temperature of air flowing from heater ducts should be between 90 and 130 degrees.
- Road test truck by checking for leaks (coolant, oil and air).

EXTRA ITEMS

- Ensure that all chains are in excellent condition.
- Carry an extra gallon of antifreeze.
- Keep an ice scraper handy.

These handy winter tips should prepare you for a safer and sounder winter season!

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