Safe Winter Driving (+ some tips)

If you drive for your job, then you have even more reason than the rest of us to pay special attention to your vehicle and your driving when the snow starts to fly. Service that you'll need to do or have done should cover your car battery, charging system, belts, and antifreeze mix (50/50 coolant/water is best). And you won't see where you're going without good wiper blades and a full reservoir of windshield washer fluid.

**tip:** Turn your wipers off before you shut off your engine. If you don't, when you start the car the next time, the wiper blades will try to move to their rest position and may burn out if they're frozen in place.

Preparations for winter trips should involve a cell phone, a survival kit (including snowbrush, ice scraper, shovel, sand, blanket, perhaps some extra winter clothes), and a full tank of gas. If you're stranded and need to keep the engine running to stay warm, you'll want as much fuel as possible.

**tip:** Be careful about carbon monoxide if you get stuck in an older car and end up sitting with the engine idling. You may want to open the window a crack to prevent CO building up from exhaust leaks. And periodically get out to clear snow away from your tailpipe.

What about your tires? You can decide whether your driving conditions warrant "winter" tires (used to be "snow tires) or whether a good all-season tire that you won't need to change will work for you.

**tip:** Check your tire pressure. It could get too low in the winter, since it drops with the falling temperature (about 1 pound per 10 degrees).

Newer cars have lots of built-in features that make them safer in winter, including

- antilock braking - enables steering when you’re sliding to a stop.
- traction control - helps your car accelerate when your drive wheels are slipping.
- an electronic stability system - can prevent fishtailing by sensing the car's direction and applying individual ABS brakes to steer the car back on course
- four-wheel or all-wheel drive - valuable depending on the terrain and conditions you confront
- winter transmission modes (on vehicles with automatic transmissions) - make the car start accelerating in 2nd gear rather than 1st, and shift as promptly as possible to higher gear
- heated side mirrors, heated steering wheel, wiper de-icer, heated seats, etc.....

**final tip:** Yours may be the most stripped-down model on the road, but you can always do 2 things that will help ensure your safety in snowy conditions: #1 - before you go, clean your car off completely (including your headlight}s) and #2 - GO SLOW.

cars.com (Technology for Winter Driving) -
www.cars.com/go/advice/Story.jsp?section=top&story=winterTips&subject=more&referer=advice

Car Talk (Winter Driving Tips) - www.cartalk.com/content/features/WinterDriving/print_tips.pdf