

SLEET AND FREEZING RAIN

Both sleet and freezing rain are extremely hazardous. The weight of the frozen precipitation can break power and telephone lines, snap tree limbs, damage unstable structures, and cause extremely hazardous driving conditions. The following provides more information on the dangers of sleet and freezing rain, and tips for driving in Nebraska's winter conditions.

Sleet

Sleet is rain that turns to pellets/slush before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes moisture already on roadways and other surfaces to freeze.

Freezing Rain

Just like the name implies, freezing rain is rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads, walkways, trees, and power lines. In extreme cases the weight of the ice can cause tree limbs to snap and break, causing additional safety hazards.

Freezing Rain/Sleet Advisory

If an accumulation of freezing rain or sleet is expected, local authorities will issue a freezing rain/sleet advisory. If you are not already driving, it's best to stay inside until road conditions improve.



Winter Driving

The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. If it is your first experience in driving on snow covered or icy roads, you should learn how your vehicle handles differently before heading out on the highway. If you must go out, keep a windshield scraper and small broom in the car, keep at minimum of a half-tank of gas, verify road conditions in

other areas before departing on any trip, always travel during daylight when possible, dress warmly in layers, and carry a small supply of water and high energy snacks. Here are some additional tips to make your winter travels safer:

- Beware of icy spots, especially on bridges and in sheltered areas. Drive at reduced speeds and allow distance to react to traffic. Slow down gradually when approaching curves and stops.
- Turn off cruise control in wet or snowy weather!
- Keep your headlights on, particularly during inclement weather. Make sure your headlights, taillights and windows are clean so you can see and be seen.
- Motorists may use studded snow tires in Nebraska from November 1 to April 1. School buses, emergency vehicles and mail carrier vehicles may use them anytime during the year.
- Check often for current weather reports through local media sources before you travel.
- Keep the radio on. Weather conditions change rapidly and so do the road conditions.
- For 24-hour-a-day, year-round Nebraska traveler information, motorists can dial 511 on their cell phone or landline. If outside Nebraska, dial 800-906-9069. 511 provides motorists current information about weather conditions, road conditions and travel advisories. The 511 system and various other weather links are available at www.transportation.nebraska.gov or www.511nebraska.org.
- Make sure everyone in a motor vehicle wears a seat belt and children are in a car safety seat.
- When traveling outside of a business or residential district, it is unlawful to follow a highway maintenance vehicle (snowplow, truck or grader) more closely than 100 feet when it is plowing snow, spreading salt or sand, or displaying a flashing amber or blue light. If conditions permit, however, drivers may pass a maintenance vehicle.
- Snowplows cause soft snow to swirl. It can become difficult to see the plow and for the plow operator to see you. Turn on your headlights and windshield wipers for additional visibility.
- Plowing snow on a multi-lane roadway is often done in tandem (more than one snowplow at a time). Give them plenty of room. Do not pass on the right side and always stay where the operator can see you.

You can also contact the 55th Wing Safety Office at 294-6357 for additional tips on winter safety in Nebraska.

Vehicle Preparation

Make sure your vehicle is in good mechanical condition. Items that you or your mechanic should check are:

Battery
Exhaust system
Heater
Antifreeze

Wiper blades and washer fluid

Ignition System

Brakes

Defroster

Oil levels

Thermostat

Tires (Consider studded snow tires)

Lights (Don't forget hazard lights!)