



In the know about snow

A Guide To Motorists

Winter traveling can be quite challenging for drivers. It is a challenge, as well, for the Department of Transportation in our battle against Mother Nature. As you can imagine, keeping the roadways and bridges safe and passable is a large task.

The Department of Transportation employees work hard to plow the roads even in the worst weather conditions. Nevertheless, our efforts are sometimes questioned by those who may not fully be aware of our operations.

You may have asked yourself the following questions while driving in the

middle of a snowstorm. The answers here will help you to better understand the Department of Transportation's winter traffic services, and increase you safety awareness, and *keep you in the know about snow*.

Q. HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PREPARE FOR A MAJOR SNOW STORM?

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Q. I LIVE ON A BACK ROAD. WHY DOES IT TAKE SO LONG FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO SERVICE MY ROAD?

A. The Department of Transportation services roads on a priority basis according to traffic volume. State roads with the highest amount of traffic, such as interstates and four-lanes, receive service first, followed by secondary roads. During a winter storm, The Department of Transportation employees work around-the-clock so that all types of roads receive adequate service in priority order.

Q.WHAT DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PUT ON SLIPPERY ROADS IN THE WINTER?

A. Salt, anti-skid, or a combination of these are applied to roadways during snow and ice removal operations. Anti-skid is a natural or man-made aggregate material such as sand, fine stone or manufacturing by-product. Salt helps to melt the snow or ice and the anti-skid provides for traction. The amount of material on the roadway depends on type of road, type and duration of storm, and temperature.

Q. HOW DOES THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICE ALL THE STATE ROADS THROUGHOUT A COUNTY EFFECTIVELY?

A. There are "stockpiles" located throughout each county which contain anti-skid material. Several trucks are assigned to each stockpile to service the roads in that area of the county. The Department of Transportation also receives assistance from local municipalities and contract sales on servicing some roads.

Q. DURING A SNOW STORM, WHY IS ONLY ONE LANE PLOWED ON A MULTI-LANE HIGHWAY?

A. Often, only one lane is plowed because the driving lane has the highest priority during the storm. Whenever possible, "tandem" plowing (2 trucks plowing side by side) takes place.

Q. WHY DOES A TRUCK MOVE SO SLOWLY WHILE PLOWING SNOW AND SPREADING ANTI-SKID?

A. The driver must adjust his or her vehicle speed according to various conditions such as heavy or wet snow, ice, or residential areas. If traveling too fast, anti-skid will not stay on the road. Before you decide to pass a truck, however, ask yourself, "Is this pass really necessary?" Passing a snow plow can be extremely dangerous. There is never a "safe" time to pass, but if you must, do it with extreme caution.

Q. WHAT IS A SAFE DISTANCE TO FOLLOW BEHIND A SNOW PLOW TRUCK?

A. The normal safe following distance between two vehicles (2-second rule) should be doubled during inclement weather. When following a truck, your headlights should be on low beam. And remember, every truck has blind spots. This is an area to the side and rear not visible by the driver of the vehicle; it is greater for trucks. In addition, following too closely increases your chances of loose material flying up and damaging your vehicle.

Q. IS IT TRUE THAT BRIDGES FREEZE BEFORE ROAD SURFACES?

A. Yes, because the air below bridges tends to cool the bridge faster than the normal road surface. Also, be cautious of shaded areas that don't receive sunlight and drifted areas along the road.

Q. WHAT IS "BLACK ICE"?

A. Black ice is a thin layer of transparent ice not always visible on the roadway but very slippery.

Q. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "PUMP YOUR BRAKES"?

A. Avoid slamming on your brakes on slippery roads. Hard braking can lock your wheels and cause loss of steering. Apply brakes gently and ease off when you start to skid. Turn wheel in direction of the skid. Most important, drive smart! Think ahead! Drive at a reduced speed.

Q. WHY DOESN'T PENNDOT REPLACE MAILBOXES THAT IT KNOCKS DOWN?

A. In all cases, we try to avoid damaging anyone's property. However, mailboxes are often placed in the state's legal right-of-way, which means that the Department of Transportation is not liable for damages to mailboxes caused by snow removal operations. We suggest property

owners ensure their mailbox rests on a firm support so it will be better able to withstand the "windrow" of snow from the plow.

Q. HOW CAN I PREPARE MYSELF AND MY VEHICLE FOR WINTER TRAVEL?

A. Be sure to clean all snow and ice from your windows and mirrors before traveling. Make sure all lights are working, and always use your headlights during a storm. Keep wiper blades in good condition, and keep all fluid levels full. Check tires for tread and proper inflation, and add weight to rear-wheel drive vehicles. Carry emergency equipment in your car such as flares, a shovel, chains, flashlight, jumper cables, sand, a hat, boots and gloves.

Q. ARE THERE ANY "RULES" FOR WINTER DRIVING?

A. Remember this: Drive cautiously. Avoid making any sudden moves or fast turns. Avoid quick acceleration or hard braking. Slow and easy is the rule. And for good reason--your safety!!!