OCTOBER
SAFETY TALK

Tips for Winter Driving

Motor Vehicle accidents account for a large number of injuries to municipal workers. After all, the majority of municipal staff spend a great deal of their working time, driving.

Add in winter hazards, and the number of incidents climb. Whether you're in the lower mainland, dealing with winter rain, fog, and occasionally (traffic-stopping) snow, or in the interior or north of our Province dealing with snow, ice and treacherous conditions,

winter driving requires special skills.

Here are just a few tips:

Drop your speed. It is safer in winter to travel less than the posted speed. It really doesn't take that much longer at slower speeds, to reach your destination. For instance: Travelling 20 km at 80 km/h takes 15 minutes. Travelling the same distance at 60km/h takes 20. Is that five minutes worth an accident? Never.

Maintain a safe following distance. This goes without saying. While driving in dry conditions the "rule of thumb" is to keep a two second space between you and the vehicle in front of you, in winter driving it should be as much as four seconds.

Watch for black ice. Okay, you can't "watch" for it, but be aware that shaded areas, bridges and overpasses, railway crossings and intersections can be icy, even if other areas aren't.

Avoid sudden braking, accelerating or turning. Each of these can make your car skid.

Know how to handle a skid. If you start to skid, ease off the accelerator or brake, look and steer smoothly in the direction you want to go. Your car may start to skid in the opposite direction. Keep calm, don't pound on the brake or accelerator, repeat the process of steering in the direction you want to go until you regain control.

Make sure you can see clearly. Always clear your entire windshield, and let the vehicle warm up enough so the defrost clears the fog away.

Have good winter tires. It's now the law in BC to have good winter tires for winter driving conditions, from October 1 to March 31.

Read more tips, including how to prepare your vehicle and yourself for winter driving, at www.shiftintowinter.ca. Here you'll find information for employers, supervisors and workers, to help keep everyone safe on winter roads.

British Columbia Municipal Safety Association

bcmsa.ca