



NEWS RELEASE

Andy Skoogman, Director of Communications

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CONTACT:

Nathan Bowie, DPS, 651-201-7571
Beth Petrowske, MnDOT, 651-366-4280

SNOW IS ON THE WAY — ADAPT NOW FOR WINTER DRIVING

ST. PAUL — With snowfall predicted across Minnesota, the Departments of Public Safety (DPS) and Transportation (MnDOT) urge motorists to adapt driving skills to winter road conditions and be buckled up, patient and attentive behind the wheel. During 2006–2008 in Minnesota, officers reported snowy or icy road conditions in more than 45,000 crashes that resulted in 168 traffic deaths and 14,540 injuries.

Officials stress that motorists drive at safe speeds according to road conditions and keep a safe stopping distance between vehicles. Motorists should use extra precautions when driving around snowplows by keeping at least five car-lengths between their vehicles and plows. Last year there were 103 snowplow/vehicle crashes in Minnesota and 27 of these crashes occurred when vehicles crashed into the back of snow plows. The crashes are typically caused by inattentive drivers or by motorists driving too close.

Snowplow trucks can be twice as wide as a semi truck. They are rigged with a plow that extends 12-15 feet out from the front of the truck and an 8-10 foot-wide side wing plow. Operators have a much to monitor and control and their ability to see behind them is limited by side mirrors. Their vision can also be hampered by the snow clouds they create while plowing.

MnDOT's snowplow crews are prepared for the season's first major winter storm. There are 103 plows in Rochester area and 80 plows in Mankato area that will be clearing roadways around the clock, if necessary.

DPS and MnDOT say that bridges and overpasses can be more slippery than other parts of the road. If skidding, motorists should remain calm, ease foot off the gas and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go. If vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply a steady firm pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump ABS brakes. Do not use cruise control on snow/icy/wet roads.

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Motorists should equip their vehicles with a scraper/brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain and a bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction. Blanket(s), heavy boots, warm clothing and flashlights are also important, as are storing high-energy foods such as chocolate or energy bars.

If motorists become stranded, stay calm and stay put in the vehicle to decrease risk of frostbite or hypothermia and increase chances of being rescued. Run the vehicle's engine for heat about once an hour — every half hour in extreme cold. Make sure exhaust pipe is clear to prevent carbon monoxide from getting into the vehicle. Leave one window slightly open. Tie a piece of brightly colored cloth to your antenna to alert others and aid rescuers. Limit your sleep to short naps. Always take a charged cell phone on trips.

Parents of teen drivers should make sure new motorists experience snow and ice driving in a safe environment, such as an empty parking lot.

DPS and MnDOT recommend the following for safe winter driving:

- Always use seat belts.
- Adjust speed to road and weather conditions — lower speeds minimize crashes.
- Keep a safe stopping distance between vehicles, and leave extra room between your vehicle and snow plows or other removal equipment.
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly on icy/snow-covered roads to regain traction and avoid skids.
- Do not use cruise-control.
- Do not “power up” hills which may cause wheels to spin. Build momentum before reaching a hill and don't stop while traveling uphill. Reduce speed going downhill.
- Know your brakes — keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of the foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.
- Give yourself plenty of travel time — don't put your schedule before safety.
- Clear snow and ice from vehicle windows, hood, headlights, brake lights and directional signals.
- Headlights must be turned on when it is snowing or sleeting.

For weather-related road condition information call 5-1-1 or visit

www.511mn.org. For winter driving tips and more winter safety information visit http://www.winterweather.state.mn.us/WHAH_Home.asp.