



Think Safety!

A Publication Of The West Virginia Propane Gas Association

Winter 2007

Winter Brings Hazardous Driving Conditions

Driving a bobtail, service truck or any other vehicle can be greatly affected by the weather.

It is easy to make the assumption that we can handle any type of road condition, but as the number of accidents across West Virginia show, this isn't necessarily the case.

Nearly every winter at least one propane company loses a vehicle to an accident often

the result of icy roads and sometimes directly to the lack of driver training for those road conditions.

Many types of weather can cause problems especially snow and ice this time of year. Rain and fog can also cause problems.

This issue of *Think Safety* will focus on preparations for poor weather and adjustments that should be made while driving.



Before You Leave The Plant:

Before you start your engine, there are several things that can be done to keep you and others safe while driving in inclem-

ent weather.

Inspect your vehicle: Problems with your vehicle tend to reveal themselves when the

temperature falls.

Make sure your brakes are in good working condition.

Check for tread wear on your tires, and make sure they are inflated to the proper air pressure. **Deflated tires will not give you extra traction.**

Check your windshield wipers and make sure you have plenty of washer fluid. The mixture of road salt, moisture and road grime can greatly reduce the visibility through your windshield at a time when visibility is critical. Without good wipers and plentiful washer fluid driving can become very dangerous.

Check your antifreeze regularly and make sure it is at ad-

equated temperature protection. Your cooling system should be flushed periodically to help avoid overheating problems. True, you will be driving in colder temperatures, but when the roads are bad you are more likely to be driving at slower speeds which reduce the effect of air cooling.

Keep your fuel tank as full as possible to avoid fuel-line freeze-up and provide extra weight for lighter vehicles.

Keep your headlights, taillights, and windows clear of snow and ice so that you can see and be seen.

Dress warmly. Layered

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Before You Leave

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clothing is better than just a heavy coat. If you have a cell phone, make sure it is fully charged. Keep a "care package" in your vehicle. Include a snow shovel, a blanket, warm gloves, flashlight and batteries and some non-perishable snacks. Keep in mind. Though you might only be a few miles from the plant, in extreme conditions you could be stranded

for a lengthy time.

Always allow extra time to reach your destination.

Make sure someone knows where you are going and by what route.

Always know the weather and road conditions before you get on the road. Current Road Conditions can be obtained toll-free at 1-(877) WVA-ROAD.



Driving In The Rain:

We usually think of snow and ice when we think of winter, but rain presents its own driving concerns.

Traction and visibility are the two biggest problems associated with driving in rain.

Roads can become slippery when rain first starts to fall. This is especially true following an extended dry period. Oil and other materials collect on the road while it is dry. This mixes

with the rain to create slippery conditions. This condition can last anywhere from a few minutes until a few hours. Eventually the rain will wash away the slick material.

Don't turn your windshield wipers on with the very first sign of rain. Allow a slight buildup of rain which will assist cleaning the windshield and eliminate smearing. A heavy rain can cause water to pool and vehicles to hydro-



plane. This is true with any vehicle, no matter the size. The faster a vehicle travels, the more likely it is to hydroplane. Slow down to reduce hydroplaning.

Worn tires also reduce contact with the road. Make sure your tires have plenty of tread to channel water away and maintain contact with the road.

The least amount of moisture on the roadway will be found in the trails of other vehicles. Driving in these trails will

usually provide the best traction.

Heavy rains also reduce your ability to see the roadway and other vehicles. Increase the distance between you and other vehicles. Always make sure your wipers are in good condition and are changed on a regular basis.

If the visibility is reduced to an unsafe point even with wipers, pull over and wait for the rain to slack.

Wet-Weather Driving Tips

- Regularly clean wipers with a damp cloth to remove oils and debris.
- Clean windows, outside and inside.
- Make sure that headlights and taillights are working and lenses are clean.
- Make sure tires have sufficient tread and are properly inflated.
- Don't tailgate.
- If the steering feels light, gently ease off the accelerator and allow the vehicle to slow. Don't abruptly hit the brakes.
- If in a skid, do not brake heavily, jerk the steering wheel or panic. Turn your steering wheel into the direction of the skid and gently brake.
- Never drive through deep water on a flooded road. If you drive through deep puddles, gently press the brake a couple of times afterward to dry the brakes.



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Driving In Snow:

There are two factors that create the most trouble for winter drivers, snow and ice.

Though closely associated, they both pose their own dangers.

Snow causes reduced traction but often causes the most trouble by reducing visibility. Road signs and markings can be obscured.

It is important to reduce speed and increase following distance while driving in snow to both facilitate better control of the vehicle and allow more time to react.

Always use low-beam headlights during snow no matter what time of day so that you can be better seen and see.

High-beam headlights are reflected off of the snow. Stop often to clean the headlights.

“Snow hypnosis” is another danger of falling snow. This is created when a driver begins to stare into the snow while driving during a heavy snow.

Make sure you focus your attention on the road in front of you.

Slow and smooth acceleration is the key to traction in snow. Also, avoid sudden turns. If you feel the wheels slip while accelerating, let off of the accelerator and begin the maneuver again. This helps reduce the chance of skidding.

Deep snow poses another problem. Tire chains can aid



traction when the snow is especially deep.

Maintain a safe following distance behind snow plows. Snow plows have limited visibility, especially behind them. Try to avoid passing snow

plows. The road behind them is much better than what is in front of them. If a snow plow stops in front of you, don't pull behind it. Snow plows will sometimes back up to clear a trouble spot.

Driving On Ice:

Ice is the more hazardous winter cousin of snow. Unlike snow, ice can sometimes hide from drivers and it can defy learned physics.

Although water freezes at 32 degrees F, road surfaces can freeze when the air temperature drops to 40 degrees F or lower.

Bridges and overpasses are especially vulnerable to the dangers of ice because they will freeze at a higher temperature than other parts of the road. Bridge surfaces are exposed to wind and cold temperatures from above and below, causing it to cool and freeze faster than the rest of the road.

Snow that melts during the day normally freezes in the late afternoon or night when conditions are colder. This

“white ice” sneaks up on you and can form where you drove very safely earlier in the day. Usually it can be seen on the road, but it may look like snow.

“Black ice” may not be seen at all. It occurs when water freezes on black pavement especially bridges or underpasses.



It may occur when it rains at lower temperatures. The road may appear to be wet when in fact it is covered by a layer of ice. You may not know that black ice is there at all until it is too late and you feel your vehicle slide.

You can sometimes detect black ice by watching the spray displaced by other vehicles. If a vehicle does not produce spray on what appears to be a wet road, then it could be black ice.

Keep in mind that ice at or near the freezing point is more danger-

ous than ice at extremely cold temperatures because hot tires tends to stick more readily to colder ice than ice at or near the freezing point.

When driving on ice slow down and greatly increase the following distance behind the vehicle in front of you. Also, greatly increase your stopping distance. The distance it takes to stop can increase by as much as four to 10 times that on a dry road.

Make no sudden turns and follow the braking instructions provided by the manufacturer of your vehicle. Braking techniques differ according to the type of brakes you have.

When using standard brakes, it is better to pump them and come to a slow, controlled stop. With anti-lock brakes, you should “stomp and steer.”

Brochures Address Safety Concerns

After the accident in Ghent, you may want to utilize some safety information available to you to either mail to your customers or use to hand out in your place of business.

There are several safety brochures that may be helpful, in light of that tragic situation. Should you want to order quantities of these brochures, you may do so through the Association Office.

The available brochures are:
Important Propane Safety Information for Users of

Small Cylinders, #000017 \$7.50 for 125/pack.

Important Propane Safety Information for You and Your Family, #003121, \$7.50 for 125/pack.

Other items you may want to consider include:

If You Smell Gas, Don't Light It bill stuffer, #003101, \$16 for 500/pack.

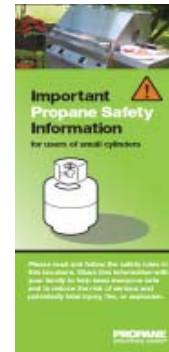
How's Your Nose Spanish Version, #03120S, \$27.50 for 500/pack.

And for your staff and em-

ployees, consider purchasing: Crisis Communication Guide, #003885, \$5.50 each.

More details can be found on these and more at www.propanecatalog.com

Lastly, in the whirl of stories written about last week's incident, some useful safety news got out there as this article from the Register Herald published in Beckley shows (http://www.registerherald.com/local/local_story_031220935.html)



Dear WV Propane Industry Member:

One of the cornerstones in the success and longevity of our industry is that we have and continue to make SAFETY one of the building blocks.

You hold in your hands the inaugural issue of *Think Safety!*. It is designed to provide timely and useful education about the safe handling and use of propane. You are encouraged to share this with all your employees and use the information as possible topics for safety meetings.

Because *Think Safety!* will come out on a quarterly basis, I invite you to suggest topics for future issues. I also want to thank Bill Kraft, Safety & Education Chairman, and Tom Osina, Executive Director, for bringing this concept to fruition.

Sincerely,

Tracey Edwards
President

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Training Quiz

Name _____ Social Security Number _____

1. You should inspect your vehicle before leaving the plant during inclement weather.
A. True B. False
2. Deflated tires give you better road traction on snow and ice.
A. True B. False
3. Overheating is not a problem for your vehicle during the winter. A. True B. False
4. What items should be included in a vehicle winter care package?
A. Snow shovel B. Warm gloves C. Nonperishable food D. A, B, and C
5. What number can you call for West Virginia road conditions? 1-(877) WVA-ROAD
6. When driving in snow you should:
A. Reduce Speed B. Use low-beam headlights C. Use smooth acceleration D. A, B, and C
7. When you feel the wheels slip in snow, you should:
A. Hit your breaks B. Turn hard C. Let off accelerator D. All of the above
8. Should you normally pass a snowplow?
No, the road is better behind a snowplow than in front, and snowplow drivers have limited visibility.
9. The temperature must be at 32 degrees F for ice to freeze on roads.
A. True B. False
10. Ice can freeze on roads at temperatures as high as 40 degrees F.
A. True B. False
11. Bridges and overpasses freeze at higher temperatures than the roadway.
A. True B. False
12. Melting snow causes the most problems by producing:
A. Water on the road B. White Ice C. Glare D. A, B, and C
13. The best way to detect black ice is to:
A. Hit your brakes B. Turn your wheel C. Watch for spray D. Neither answer
14. Ice is more dangerous at:
A. 32 degrees F B. 10 degrees F C. 5 degrees F D. 0 degrees F
15. Compared to a dry road, on ice, the distance required to stop can increase by as much as:
A. 3 times B. 20 times C. 15 times D. 4 to 10 times
16. When using anti-lock brakes on ice, you should:
A. Pump them slowly B. Avoid using them C. Stomp and Steer D. None of the above
17. Rain poses no problem to driving when it first begins to fall.
A. True B. False
18. The effects of hydroplaning can be neutralized by driving faster.
A. True B. False

Training Quiz Answers

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