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# THE NORTH COUNTRY HEALTH EFFECT

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A health & safety guide brought to you by the Clinton County Health Department.

## Staying safe on the road



**W**inter vehicle preparedness includes a visit to your local mechanic and being ready with the right equipment if you get stuck on the road during the winter. Pack-up and tune-up to stay safe on the road this winter.

## Vehicle safety checklist

- Check your battery.** As the temperature drops, so does your battery power. This also means more battery power will be used to start your car.
- Make sure all the lights on your vehicle are in working order.** This includes: headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers and interior lights.
- Be sure you have enough antifreeze** in your vehicle and that the cooling system is in working order.
- Make sure your **windshield wipers, rear and front defrosters work**, and that your **wiper fluid tank is full**.
- Tires lose air when the temperature drops.** Make sure each tire is filled to the manufacturers' recommended inflation pressure. This can usually be found on the driver's side door panel.
- Keep a well stocked emergency kit in your trunk.** See sidebar for a list of items to include.

## Stock the car with:

### Basic kit items:

- blanket
- coat
- food (snacks)
- hats & mittens
- water

### Safety items:

- batteries
- cell phone
- compass
- first aid kit
- flashlight
- maps
- pocket knife/utility tool
- radio

### In case you get stuck:

- chains or rope (for towing)
- compressed air (for flat tires)
- hazard flags/flares
- ice scraper
- jumper cables
- road salt, cat litter or sand (to help with traction)
- shovel



**K**eeping your vehicle maintained can decrease your risk of being involved in an accident, your car breaking down or other problems. Every car drives differently, take the time to learn how yours handles the winter weather. Slow down, pay attention and add extra time to get from place to place.

## Winter driving tips

**Keep your gas tank full.** Try to keep your gas tank at least half-full to prevent the fuel line from freezing.

**If road conditions are hazardous, avoid driving if possible.** Wait until road and weather conditions improve before venturing out in your vehicle.

**Before driving your vehicle, clear snow, ice, and dirt** from the windows, roof, forward sensors, headlights, tail lights, backup camera and other sensors around the vehicle.

**Drive slowly.** It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface. Give yourself more room between you and the car in front of you to allow plenty of time to stop.

**Do not use cruise control.**

**Know whether your vehicle has an anti-lock brake system** and learn what do to if your vehicle starts to slide. Anti-lock brake systems prevent your wheels from locking up, helping to prevent skidding.

## Car seats & winter jackets

Bulky clothing, including thick winter coats and snowsuits, **should not be worn underneath the harness** of a car seat. To keep your child safe and warm in the car, dress your child in thin layers and use a coat or blanket over the straps. **Don't forget hats, mittens and socks or booties.**

## Navigating around snow plows

**Don't crowd a snow plow** or travel beside it. Snow plows travel slowly, make wide turns, stop often, overlap lanes and exit the roadway frequently.

**The road behind an active snow plow is safer to drive on.** If you find yourself behind a snow plow, stay put. If you have to pass, use caution.

When you are driving behind a snow plow, **don't follow too closely.** A snow plow operator's field-of-vision is limited; if you can't see their mirrors, the driver can't see you. **Materials used to de-ice the road could also hit your car.**

**Snow plows can throw up a cloud of snow that can reduce your visibility** to zero in less time than you can react. Never drive into a snow cloud—it can hide vehicles or other hazards.





## If you get stuck on the road...

**Stay with your vehicle** and don't over exert yourself.

**Put bright markers** on your vehicle's antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light turned on.

**Don't run your vehicle** for long periods of time. This can lead to carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Exposure to CO can be deadly. If you must run your vehicle, clear the exhaust pipe of any snow and run it only for short periods of time with the windows down – just long enough to stay warm.

For more health & safety tips, visit [www.clintonhealth.org/nchealtheffect](http://www.clintonhealth.org/nchealtheffect) or scan the QR code.



Information in this guide was adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)); the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH, [www.health.ny.gov](http://www.health.ny.gov)); and the American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)).