



## ADVENTURE MEDICAL KITS' TOP FIVE WINTER DRIVING TIPS

### *KEEP THE GAS TANK FULL, PACK ULTRALIGHT GEAR*

Winter has arrived and that means so has winter driving -- engine failure, multi-car pileups, and worse. During this season, drivers need to be extra vigilant with their safety in order to avoid accidents and getting stranded out in the cold.

“The key to safe automobile travel in the winter months boils down to managing your risks,” says Frank Meyer, a trained wilderness EMT and co-founder of Adventure Medical Kits. Start by lowering all your own risks, says Meyer, and following some simple winter driving tips and you’ll dramatically increase your level of road safety:

**1) Car Maintenance.** Before you head out the door make sure your car is in good working order. This means a full tank of gas, fully charged battery with no leaks, antifreeze in the cooling system, engine tuned up, tire chains in the trunk in case of snowy weather, windshield wiper fluid filled and unfrozen and no mechanical problems you are aware of. All lights working properly? Make sure you check your tires for good tread and proper pressure.

**2) Your Health.** So your car is in good shape – how about you? Are you well rested, fed and hydrated? Lack of sleep and an empty stomach can hinder your ability to adjust capably while driving in adverse weather.

**3) Oh Yeah -- About The Weather.** Before you leave check the weather reports and if bad weather is in the forecast ask yourself if you really need to make the trip. Know the difference between a winter storm watch and warning? A Watch means a storm could develop in your area and a Warning means a winter storm is in your area or approaching rapidly. When the weather service is forecasting a blizzard be prepared for frequent gusts of wind over 35 miles an hour and falling snow for up to three hours or longer. Freezing rain? Sleet? Time to chill. Stay where you are. No activity or visit is worth the elevated risks of driving in marginal to downright dangerous conditions.

**4) Drive With Extreme Caution.** Remember this - the trick to driving on snow or ice is to avoid sudden acceleration or deceleration. Keep your speed constant and your tires should hold their traction as long as you are traveling at a reasonable speed. Plan on driving 10-20 miles or more per hour slower on snow packed, icy roads. During daylight hours use your headlights to make yourself more visible. If whiteout or blizzard conditions exist – pull as far off the side of the road as safely allows and turn on your emergency flashers on so others can see you. Continue on when the weather lets up. **Other Tips:** when possible drive during daylight hours, stay on main roads and don’t take shortcuts. Leave a travel plan with your

neighbors, friends or relatives and check in with them when you arrive. That way they know where to start looking when you don't show up.

**5. Emergency Gear.** Emergency supplies are the final ingredient in the risk management winter driving recipe. If your cargo space is as precious as mine you might want to go the Ultralight route made popular by backpackers and hikers. If your survival equipment is small and compact the odds are it will be in the car when you need it and if – as a last resort – you need to go for help it will be easy to take with you. Here's what I carry:

- **Heatsheets Survival Blankets.** They fit two people and I carry at least three with me. These thin, lightweight polyethylene blankets are coated with a thin layer of vaporized aluminum and reflect back 90% of your body heat. Plus they have survival and first aid instructions printed directly on the blanket.
- **Pocket Survival Pak.** This kit has everything you need, including a compass, firestarter and tinder, signal mirror and whistle, duct tape, stainless steel wire and thorough survival instructions. If you need to go find help take this and a Heatsheets Survival blanket with you.
- **Adventure Medical Kits' Adventurer.** Contains everything from trauma materials to wound cleaning supplies and a 200 page first aid manual to read while you are waiting for help. My favorite part of the book is the "Weiss Advice" tips on improvisation. Did you know you can open an airway by safety pinning the patient's tongue to their lower lip? Ouch and gross, I know, but it can save someone's life.
- **Water.** Dehydration predisposes you to hypothermia. Bring a gallon and keep it in your car and not the cold trunk where it could freeze more easily. When you run out you can always use your Pocket Survival Pak to make a fire and melt snow in your hubcap.
- **Flares.** Stay visible and protect you and your car from being rear ended.
- **Tire chains.** When all else fails and maximum traction is required.
- **Avalanche shovel.** These lightweight, compact aluminum collapsible shovels are used by backcountry skiers and snowmobilers to dig their friends out from under an avalanche. They are also great for digging your car out or for keeping your exhaust pipe clear of snow to prevent the carbon monoxide from backing up into your car and silently putting everyone to sleep – permanently.
- **Extra Clothing.** Keep extra mitts, hats and a coat in the car. While you may be properly clothed to spend a few unexpected hours or more out in the cold, someone in your traveling party may not.
- **Day pack with shoulder straps.** About the size your kids use for school. Put everything in here – except the tire chains -- and you'll be good to go.

Our highways in winter are full of lessons. One minute the roads are clear and dry and five minutes later they are covered in white, erasing the road lines and obscuring the boundaries between pavement and dirt. Taking the time to prepare yourself and your car can help reduce the stress of traveling with your family, help you get to the slopes or relatives on time and enjoy the winter – my favorite season of the year.

***Frank Meyer lives in the snow Mecca known as Bozeman, Montana.*** For more tips on outdoor survival, visit [http://www.adventuremedicalkits.com/1\\_Winterprep.asp](http://www.adventuremedicalkits.com/1_Winterprep.asp)