Winter Driving Conditions in Pullman, WA
Multi-vehicle collision on Hall Drive
Winter 2008-09

It's that time of year again; time to start thinking about winter driving in the Palouse. I have some tips to help you while navigating the streets and hills of Pullman during this winter season.

First, remember to properly warm up your vehicle and remove all snow from your vehicle. This is an important step to make sure you can see clearly out of the vehicle and people can see your vehicle's turn signals and brake lights. Also remember once your vehicle warms up, the snow on top the roof will become loose and may slide down onto your windshield when you stop. Often this snow is too much for your vehicle's wipers to remove and could keep you from seeing clearly until you stop and remove it.

Second, plan your route. Be aware of alternate routes to and from your common destinations, which may not be as steep during times when the snowplows and sanders may not have had a chance to get to your usual route.

Third, decrease speed and increase following distances. When roads are covered with snow and ice, the last thing you want to do is give your vehicle sudden input. Slamming on brakes and turning suddenly can often cause you to lose control of your vehicle on slick roads. This can be avoided by slowing down and increasing following distance, so you can have time to make gradual adjustments to your vehicle. This is also true when the roads appear to be clear during winter driving. Often times, the gravel placed on the road to improve traction during periods of snow and ice on the road, can have an opposite effect on bare roads. The gravel tends to build up on the shoulder, centerline, at stop signs and at the bottoms of hills. This build up of gravel can cause your vehicle to slide when it gets between your tires and the road surface. So remember to slow down when approaching stop signs with bare roads, so your vehicle does not slide into the intersection on the loose gravel.

Lastly, remember that just because the road is clear where you are now, does not mean it will be clear around the corner. Tree cover and low road use can cause some roads to be covered with snow and ice when others are clear. Also, freezing temperatures can create black ice, which is not readily noticeable, in areas of shade and high wind.

Be Safe,

Ofc. Doug Anderson

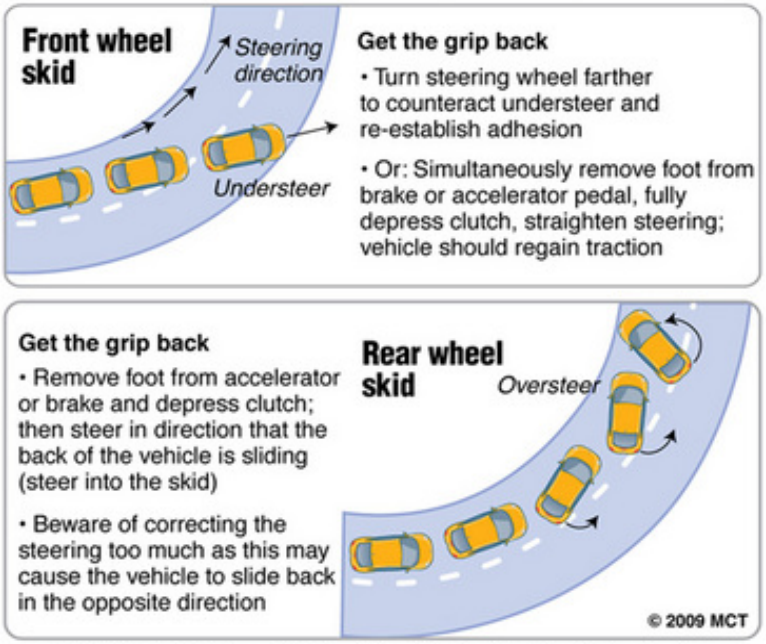
Additional Resources:

- Washington State Department of Transportation: Winter Travel
- American Automobile Association (AAA): Winter Driving Tips
- The Weather Channel: Driving in Ice and Snow
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Winter Storm Safety

Driving in snow and ice

If you must drive in winter weather, make sure your car is prepared with snow tires and that you know how to handle road conditions:

- Decrease speed and leave plenty of room to stop
- Brake gently to avoid skidding; if wheels start to lock up, ease off brake
- Keep lights, windshield clean
- Use low gears to keep traction, especially on hills
- Be particularly careful on bridges, overpasses, infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first



Source: U.S. National Safety Council, Graham Sykes U.K. Graphic: Jutta Scheibe, Bro-Jorgensen

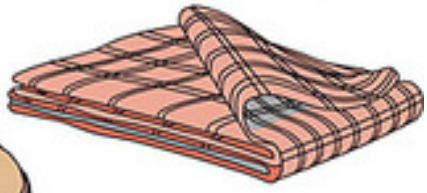
Before you go

Check your trunk for these important safety items.

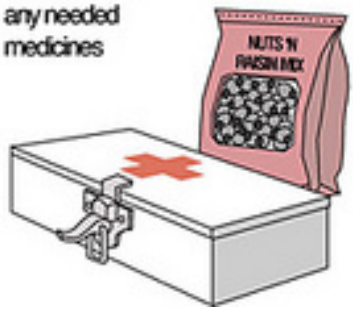
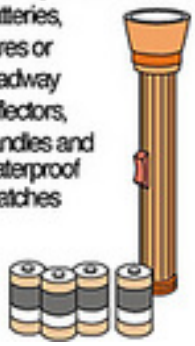
Snow removal and traction supplies:
Ice scraper, snowbrush, shovel, traction mats, tire chains and salt or sand

Roadside repair kit:
A jack, lug wrench, portable tire pump, jumper cables, antifreeze, extra drive belts, basic auto tool kit

Cold weather gear:
Blankets, extra clothing including waterproof boots, coats, socks and gloves



Survival provisions:
Nonperishable, high-calorie food, a container to melt snow into water, basic first aid kit containing bandages, antiseptic, and any needed medicines



Emergency lights:
Flashlight with extra batteries, flares or roadway reflectors, candles and waterproof matches