

Safe driving in the snow

Driving in the snow can be challenging, especially if you are not used to icy road conditions. The following tips will help prepare you and your car for the trip.

At home

Have your vehicle checked

Snowfield conditions may highlight any existing minor faults, particularly in the electrical system so it is essential to thoroughly check your vehicle before leaving home. Have your tyres, battery, brakes, cooling system, engine and windscreen inspected.

Add anti-freeze

Add anti-freeze to your engine radiator. You'll need to match the amount of anti-freeze to the capacity of the coolant system. If this isn't done and the coolant freezes, the engine block and radiator may crack, leaving you stranded with an expensive repair bill. Most modern cars use coolant with wide temperature capabilities, but you'll need to check with your service provider if special coolant is needed.

Prepare for emergencies

In case of an emergency carry a torch, blanket, tow rope, spade, wheel chocks and first aid kit.

Snow chains

All two wheel drive vehicles entering the Kosciuszko National Park must carry chains. When directed by signs or an RTA Traffic Commander, fit the chains to your vehicle's driving wheels (back wheels on rear wheel drive cars and front wheels on front wheel drive cars). Generally, this will be at special chain fitting bays along the route.

While four wheel drive vehicles may not be required to fit chains, it is still wise to carry them if you lack experience driving on ice and snow. You may also need them in the event of extreme weather conditions.

Make sure the chains you buy or hire are suitable for the wheel diameter and tyre size of your vehicle. If possible, have a practice fitting in your garage before the journey so that you understand how to fit the chains and won't be placed in a difficult situation in bad weather conditions.

Tyre pressure should be 25 kPa higher when using chains. Tyre manufactures recommend that cars with radial tyres shouldn't travel faster than 40 km/h when fitted with chains. Stop and check the tension of the chains after driving about 200 metres.

Remove the chains immediately when you are told it's safe to do so.

On the road

Watch your speed

Adjust your speed to suit the weather. Slow down when conditions deteriorate and proceed with caution, particularly in fog, snow or ice conditions.

Use fog lights or head lights

When the weather gets bad turn on your vehicle's fog or head lights. Other drivers will find your vehicle easier to see.

Take care overtaking

Never overtake on a hill, at a bend or at intersections.

Don't tailgate

Braking distances in snow and ice are increased compared to dry conditions. Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front.

Brake and accelerate gently

Braking should be gentle and early. When you accelerate, make sure you do it slowly.

Obey traffic signs

Always obey the speed limit and advisory signs, taking special notice of wildlife warning signs. Many road crashes which occur in the snow involve native animals crossing roads, particularly at night.

Snow poles and road edges

Don't drive if you can't see the edge of the road or the next snow pole. These are painted orange and are tall enough for drivers to get their bearings in heavy snow.

When leaving your car

Parking

It is important to park only in designated parking areas and follow the directions of parking attendants. It may mean a slightly longer walk but it's better than finding your car damaged at the end of the day by snow clearing vehicles.

Don't apply the handbrake

Moisture can freeze cables and brake linings. Instead, chock the wheels, but don't use rocks as they may damage snow clearing machines.

Leave the car in gear

Leave the car in gear with the front wheels turned away from the slope. Remove wheel chocks from parking area when leaving.

Apply your chains

Even if chains were not required to enter the area, it may be advisable to fit them when parking. It is easier to do this early in the day rather than later when weather conditions may have changed.

Clear ice from windows and mirrors

Clear all glass and mirrors of ice before attempting to drive away from snowfields. Use the vehicle's heater and fan in conjunction with the air conditioner.

Protect your windscreen wipers

If you're parking for an extended period, lift wipers off your windscreen or place them in a plastic bag so they won't stick to the glass.

Warm your engine

Warm the engine for a few minutes before driving off.



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