

# WINTER DRIVING

## What Workers Need to Know



### Information for drivers that operate company or personally-owned/ leased passenger cars or light duty trucks

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of traumatic workplace deaths in British Columbia. Winter conditions – such as freezing temperatures, rain, snow, black ice and reduced daylight hours – can present serious challenges for occupational drivers, whether they drive a vehicle full time, or just as part of their job.

If you drive a company or personal vehicle for work, the following information will help you understand:

- Your legal health and safety duties under the Workers Compensation Act (WCA) and driving obligations under the BC Motor Vehicle Act (MVA).

- How to reduce the risks associated with driving during the winter driving season (October 1 to April 30).
- Your rights as a worker.

*Please note: this information is primarily designed for fleets that operate passenger cars or light duty trucks. If your organization operates vehicles with a GVW in excess of 5000 kg, please consult other information sources at [ShiftIntoWinter.ca](http://ShiftIntoWinter.ca).*

## Understand Your Legal Rights and Responsibilities

- Comply with the requirements of the WCA, the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR), the MVA and Motor Vehicle Act Regulations (MVAR). If you drive outside of BC, you must follow the road safety laws in those jurisdictions.
- Learn and follow your organization's safety policies, rules and procedures.
- Do not work (or drive) while impaired, either by substance or fatigue.
- Get involved – make safety suggestions to your supervisor, the company safety representative or safety committee.
- Report workplace and road hazards – such as poor weather, vehicle or road conditions – to your supervisor.
- All workers (as defined in Part 1 of the WCA) in BC have four safety rights:
  - The right to know about driving hazards and suitable control measures.
  - The right to participate in OHS through their joint health and safety committee.
  - The right to refuse unsafe occupational driving assignments.
  - The right to no retaliation for raising concerns about work-related driving.



## Determine When Work Driving is Necessary

- Where possible, eliminate the hazards associated with winter driving by first exhausting all other means of conducting business (e.g., by e-mail, telephone, video conferencing, making use of public transportation etc.). By limiting vehicle trips, you will reduce your personal risk, reduce costs and improve the environment.

### When Driving is Necessary

- Safe trips are planned trips. When driving is required, ensure that you:
  - Prepare yourself
  - Prepare your vehicle (especially if you drive your own car for work)
  - Drive for the conditions

### Prepare Yourself

- Check current weather and road conditions before driving. Go to [DriveBC.ca](https://www.drivebc.ca).
- Revise your travel schedule and route depending on the weather, road hazards, time of day, etc.
- Ask for winter driving training. Many vehicle crashes are caused by human error.
- Complete a pre-trip inspection and “circle check” (a walk around your vehicle to inspect on the overall condition of your vehicle and possible reversing hazards) before each journey.
- Follow your organization's working alone procedure. (See [WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com) for more information on this worker safety regulatory requirement.)
- Follow your organization's procedures if you become stuck or stranded (e.g., stay with the vehicle for safety and warmth; have a cell phone to call for roadside assistance or 911 in an emergency).

## Prepare Your Vehicle

The following applies, whether you operate a company or personally-owned/leased passenger car or light duty truck.

- Report any vehicle concerns to your supervisor (e.g., issues with tires, battery, brakes, cooling and heating systems, etc.)
- Review your vehicle's maintenance record. If scheduled maintenance is due, take it in for repair.
- Scrape all snow and ice from windows, lights, mirrors and vehicle surfaces before driving. Windows should be completely defrosted.
- Check your tire pressure at least once per month, or more, depending on temperature changes. (Tire pressure drops in colder conditions.)
- Ensure your fleet or personal vehicle is equipped with four matched winter tires that carry the three-peaked mountain and snowflake symbol and that all tires are in good condition. Winter tires provide better traction in cold weather (7°C or less) and in snow, slush, and icy conditions.



- Drivers must obey winter tire and chain signs throughout the province from October 1 to March 31. For select highways, including mountain passes and rural routes in high snowfall areas, the date is extended until April 30 to account for early-spring snowfall.
- If your employer provides tire chains, ask for training on how to correctly install them. Always mount chains in a safe area away from busy roads. Wear an approved high visibility vest and activate your vehicle's hazard lights.
- Keep your gas tanks full to avoid condensation, which can cause fuel lines to freeze.
- Carry a winter survival kit that includes an appropriate first aid kit, an approved high-visibility vest, additional windshield washer fluid, flares, matches or a lighter, shovel, traction mat, sandbags (for extra weight and traction), flashlight and extra alkaline batteries, battery jumper cables, spare tire, wheel wrench and a jack.

## Drive For the Conditions

- Pay full attention to your driving and the road ahead. When you are behind the wheel, driving is your only job.
- Allow extra time for work travel. Adjust your schedule so you aren't rushing to get to your destination.
- Slow down when driving. Posted speed limits are for ideal road conditions. Reduce your speed, depending on the conditions.
- Visibility is critical. Make sure you are able to see and be seen in low light conditions, blowing snow or whiteouts. Limit your driving time at night.
- Increase the distance between your vehicle and the vehicle driving in front of you. Always accelerate and brake slowly.
- Use caution when approaching highway maintenance equipment and do not pass.
- Be prepared to meet driving challenges such as limited visibility in adverse weather conditions, pedestrians or cyclists wearing dark clothing, or workers in roadside work zones.
- Understand and avoid the hazards of seasonal rain and fog:
  - Light rain mixed with residual oil can make road conditions slick.
  - Heavy rain creates conditions ideal for hydroplaning.



- o Fog can reduce visibility of the road ahead to as little as the front of the vehicle. Driving in fog should be avoided whenever possible.
- Understand and avoid the hazards of snow and ice:
  - o Hard-packed snow on a road can be as slippery as ice. Snow can also be rutted and full of hard tracks and snow “gullies” that can throw your vehicle off track.
  - o Wet snow can make for slushy roads. Heavy slush can build up in the wheel wells and affect your ability to steer.
  - o Slush and spray from other vehicles can cause sudden loss of visibility.
  - o Ice forms on roads in shaded areas, on bridges and overpasses – these sections of road often freeze much sooner and stay frozen long after the sun has risen.
  - o Sections of the road that appear black and shiny have frosted over and can cause a vehicle to suddenly lose traction.



## Additional Resources

[ShiftIntoWinter.ca](https://www.shiftintowinter.ca)

[DriveBC.ca](https://www.drivebc.ca)

[WorkSafeBC.com](https://www.worksafebc.com)

[RoadSafetyAtWork.ca](https://www.roadsafetyatwork.ca)

[ICBC.com](https://www.icbc.com)

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