

Winterizing Your Road Safety Plan

How employers and supervisors can help keep workers safe and operations running smoothly.

Who should use this guide?

The information applies to owners, employers, supervisors, and anyone else responsible for managing or directing employees.

Why should you use this guide?

Driving for work in winter may be the most dangerous thing your employees do, even if it only happens occasionally. Driving is the leading cause of traumatic work-related death in BC. Yet most crashes are preventable.

The risk elevates in winter due to road and weather conditions that can change quickly. This creates serious risks for employees, vehicles, and your organization.

This guide outlines steps you can take to reduce winter driving risks and strengthen your existing road safety procedures. Planning now can prevent injuries, downtime, and liability later.

Meeting your road safety responsibilities in winter

You're legally responsible for ensuring worker safety when they drive on the job. The vehicle they use for work is considered their workplace, even if it's their personal vehicle.

Your responsibilities don't change with the seasons. But winter brings different driving hazards than other times of year, such as rain, ice, snow, and fog. Your safety program needs to address them with increased attention to safe driving practices, vehicle readiness, and driver training. This includes:

- Identifying and managing driving-related hazards and risks
- Having procedures that help workers make safe driving decisions in severe weather
- Providing workers with winter-specific training and supervision
- Ensuring vehicles (including personal vehicles used for work) are equipped for winter conditions
- Keeping records of inspections, trip plans, training, and incidents

Employers can delegate some tasks to supervisors, but ultimate responsibility remains with the employer.

Suggested resources

For an overview of *Workers Compensation Act* and Occupational Health and Safety Regulation requirements, review our [Employer Occupational Road Safety Responsibilities Guide](#) and [Supervisor Occupational Road Safety Responsibilities Guide](#). Both guides suggest practical steps you can take to meet the requirements.

How to winterize your road safety plan

Winter conditions require adjustments to your usual road safety practices. Here's what to focus on:

Start planning early

We recommend you begin planning well before the first storm strikes. Ideally, get to work 2 to 3 months ahead of when winter conditions typically arrive in your region.

Early planning gives you time to update policies and procedures, schedule training, prepare vehicles, and communicate expectations to drivers and supervisors. It also helps you spot and address any gaps in equipment, staffing, or support systems before road and weather conditions become hazardous.

Proactive planning shows leadership, supports compliance, and helps reduce the risk of crashes, delays, and injuries.

Suggested resource

Review our [Winter Driving Safety Planning Tool Kit](#), which includes a checklist you can use to stay organized and on track.

Know who's driving, when, and why

Mapping out your organization's driving activities is the first step toward winterizing your road safety plan.

Make a list that includes full-time drivers as well as employees who often or occasionally use a vehicle for work. They may attend meetings, visit clients, or run errands. Make note of whether employees use a company vehicle or their own.

Also make note of the type of driving they do and the routes they use. Do they spend hours on the road in heavy traffic areas? Make infrequent or short trips in remote areas? Drive alone? Drive at night or early morning when lighting is poor? All of these scenarios carry risk in winter conditions.

Understanding when and why employees are driving helps you assess what kind of training and preparation is needed, and how best to support safe travel.

Assess risk and plan to reduce it

Get your drivers to help you do a risk assessment to identify winter driving hazards and assess the risk they create. Then collaborate with them to develop practical strategies to reduce those risks.

Base your risk-reduction actions on the results of the assessment, tackling the highest risks first.

Involving drivers in the process gives you direct insights into real-world challenges and increases employee buy-in.

Suggested resource

Use our interactive [Fall and Winter Driving Risk Assessment Tool](#) (XLS). It lists common fall and winter driving hazards, helps you rate them, and suggests ways to reduce the risks.

Update your policies and procedures

Review and update your road safety policy and safe driving procedures to reflect winter-specific risks. Make sure to cover:

- Driving expectations during poor weather
- Trip planning, including cancelling or delaying travel when it's unsafe
- Check-in procedures for workers who drive alone in areas where help wouldn't be readily available in an emergency or if injury or illness occurs
- Emergency protocols covering what to do if a driver gets stranded or involved in a crash

If staff use their own vehicle, make it clear that your rules still apply.

Suggested resource

Download and edit our [Winter Driving Policy and Procedures Template](#) (Word) to suit your organization's needs.

Prepare your drivers

Winter driving requires knowledge, skill, and preparation. Give your drivers the tools and support they need to stay safe on the road by:

- Providing training and education

Winter driving skills are perishable. So offer hands-on training in key techniques such as braking on icy roads and skid recovery. Make sure drivers know how to complete a trip plan. Schedule seasonal refresher training each fall — especially for young or new workers — to keep skills sharp.

- Setting clear driving expectations

Make sure employees have a copy of your winter driving policy and procedures, understand them, and commit to following them. Direct drivers to drive for the conditions: check road and weather conditions at DriveBC.ca, reduce speed, increase following distance to at least 4 seconds, use headlights at all times, and pull over when conditions are unsafe.

- Giving reminders throughout winter

Back up your training with regular coaching, tailgate meetings, and active supervision. Ask drivers about their concerns and encourage them to report near misses. Share weather forecasts with them. Remind them of the risks of winter driving and the actions needed to reduce them, to help overcome complacency behind the wheel.

Suggested resources

Have employees review our [Winter Driving: What Workers Need to Know Guide](#).

Use our [Winter Driving Safety Tailgate Meeting Guides](#) to guide discussions.

Prepare work vehicles

Winter conditions demand more from your work vehicles. You need to make sure each one is fully equipped, maintained, and inspected for the demands of the season.

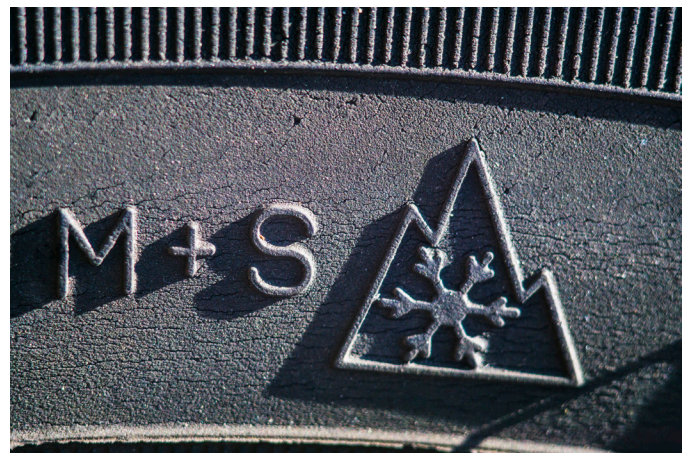
Schedule pre-season maintenance and make sure vehicles have winter safety gear, including:

- 4 matched winter tires with the 3-peaked mountain and snowflake symbol. Winter tires are required on most BC highways from October 1 through March 31, and until April 30 in some regions.
- A well-stocked emergency kit.
- Winter wipers, and functioning heaters and defrosters.

You can require drivers to conduct and report daily pre-trip inspections. Provide hands-on training so they understand how to identify any issues that could affect safety.

Suggested resource

Review our [Vehicle Inspection, Maintenance, and Selection Tool Kit](#). It includes a 5-minute video demonstrating a simple pre-trip inspection, along with a form to record the information. You'll also find a checklist for stocking your vehicle emergency kit.



Document your winter planning and actions

Keeping records of your winter safety efforts is part of your due diligence for regulatory compliance. It helps demonstrate that you've taken all reasonable steps to protect your workers.

Document all training sessions, vehicle inspections, and safety checks. Keep detailed notes from any incident investigations to support continuous improvement.

Know before you go.

For more information on winter driving safety, visit RoadSafetyAtWork.ca/Winter.

For road and weather conditions, visit DriveBC.ca.