5 ways to

IMPROVE PERFORMANCE ON ICY ROADS

ONSPOT

1. Stay attentive

Driving in slippery conditions demands your full attention and responsiveness when the road becomes icy or snow covered. You need to be at your best when driving in these difficult situations.

If you are tired or sleepy your ability to react is reduced and your movements are slower. Your eyesight, hearing and focus are reduced which makes identifying and reacting to risks more challenging. Simply, there is an increased risk of making mistakes.

Preventing fatigue behind the wheel can be accomplished by using a few tricks. First, you can keep the air in the cab cooler and avoid overeating before or during the trip. Second, try to avoid staring only at the center of the road as well as keeping a safe distance from other vehicles. Lastly, always remember the best way to prevent fatigue is listening to your body and taking a break when necessary.

- Be well rested
- Don’t take risks – take a break!

Preparing yourself will improve performance!

2. Tires are crucial

When you are driving in changing road conditions performance much depends on the tires. As road conditions may range from dry, wet, snowy and icy, using proper tires is one of the most important preparations of your truck. But the tires as such are not enough. Also tire pressure has to be checked periodically to assure that the influences of time (actually, over time some air escapes through the rubber!), changes in ambient temperatures or a small tread puncture have not caused it to change.

Performance depends on **your tires**!

Load/inflation tables are provided by tire manufacturers – take a look at their web sites. If you know the tire size, the load range and the worst case load weight, then you can find the recommended air pressure.

However, recommended air pressure listed on these load/inflation tables is mostly based on checking cold tires, i.e. when the truck is parked in the morning, before the sun and friction from rolling has warmed up the tires.

Also, the air pressure needs to be adjusted to the colder winter temperature. You should find out what applies for your specific tires, but as a rule of thumb, for every 10° F (6° C) difference in ambient temperature, tire air pressure will change about 2%, which means approx. 2 psi for a heavy truck tire (typically inflated to 80-100 psi). Adjust to higher pressure when warmer and adjust to lower pressure when colder.

Keeping tires correctly inflated will reduce wear and fuel consumption.

- Use suitable winter tires
- Check and adjust tire pressure

3. Increasing traction

No matter how skilled you are as a driver or how good your truck is – you may end up in a situation where traction is lost and you need some equipment to get rolling. In this situation, spending a stressed hour in the cold outside to mount conventional tire chains is difficult and time-consuming work. Also, if visibility is reduced and there is traffic, your safety could be put at risk.

Instead, automatic tire chains will do the job, without you leaving the cab. The flip of a switch will engage the chains and you get the traction required. Actually, you don't even have to stop the vehicle since the automatic tire chains can be engaged and disengaged while driving at speeds up to 35 mph (50km/h). Engaging the automatic tire chains in advance of an expected slippery situation, for example a traffic light, will ensure that you have traction when light turns green. This will save you even more time and hassle.

If you only have conventional tire chains, don't wait until you loose traction on a hill to put them on. Instead, they should be mounted before you enter that slippery hill. Make sure they are properly sized for your tires and tightly mounted. Dismount the chains when the road is dry again.

- Engage automatic tire chains (or mount conventional tire chains) before you get into slippery situations

Automatic tire chains
help you make it in time!

4. Braking with care

An ABS braking system prevents wheel lockup on slippery surfaces where conventional brakes usually lock up. This means you can brake hard without skidding and losing steering control. However, contrary to what many people believe, ABS doesn't allow you to drive faster or stop sooner. Learn the correct technique and practice it so that you're ready in an emergency. Read the manual from your vehicle manufacturer to learn how to use your ABS properly.

Careful braking will improve performance!

When braking on icy roads with non-ABS brakes, use extremely light pressure on the brake to control your vehicle's speed. This will help prevent the wheels from locking up and a slowly revolving wheel on an icy surface is more effective than a locked wheel skidding. If you must brake harder, you can use the "pumping" technique. This technique aims to keep tire slip at an optimal amount by controlling brake pedal pressure. When the wheel locks up you modulate the brake pedal pressure to let it rotate again. The idea is to maintain a balance between rotating wheels and locked wheels. Actually, this is what ABS brakes do automatically…

- Know how your vehicle performs when braking
- Adapt your braking technique to your braking system
- Practice braking in safe conditions

5. Performance – is in your mind

The word *performance* is easily perceived as speed, driving distance, timely deliveries and such things. However, when driving in slippery conditions, performance is more about how to best adapt to the specific situation. It is a combination of driving skills and the condition of the vehicle or equipment. Accordingly, the potential for improvement varies from driver to driver and from vehicle to vehicle. Ultimately, the ideal driving performance is the optimal interaction between the driver and the vehicle in a given situation.

Overconfident driving is a threat to performance – and safety. Overconfidence in your driving skills or in your vehicle doesn't matter, as either may lead to an error in judgement, with increased risk of accidents as a result. Taking risks and causing risky situations in slippery conditions is not improving performance – it is bad performance!

Actually, in extremely bad conditions, parking your vehicle may be safer than driving. Always check weather and road conditions before you encounter icy roads.

- Check weather and road conditions
- Be honest to yourself about your driving skills
- Don't have overconfidence in your vehicle's performance
- Don't take risks – take it easier!

You **improve performance** by just keeping the right attitude when driving!