

WINTER DRIVING HAZARDS

Winter driving can be dangerous. The possibility of losing control of one's vehicle and the need to drive defensively to protect against other drivers require alertness and readiness to react to hazards. Read the information below, and ask yourself how you can improve your driving style in any of these hazard categories.

RECOGNIZE THE HAZARDS

ENVIRONMENT

Lanes may narrow due to snow accumulation while road surfaces can become slippery from freezing rain, ice, sand, or ice melt. Sun glare, blowing snow, fog, and ice on the windows also reduce visibility in winter.

EQUIPMENT

Insufficient tread depth on tires or having brakes out of adjustment reduces the ability to stop the truck safely. An inoperable window defroster or ice on the mirrors affects visibility.

PERSONAL BEHAVIORS

Driving too fast or using cruise control in adverse road conditions increases the risk of a jackknife or losing control of the vehicle. Driving while ill, fatigued, or not wearing cold weather clothing can be distracting.

KNOW THE DEFENSE

VEHICLE INSPECTIONS

Ensure window defrosters and the heater work properly. Check tires for proper tread depth. Clean snow and ice off the tractor and trailer during stops, especially from the lights, turn signals, and reflectors.

AVOID DISTRACTIONS

Do not drive if taking any medication that can cause drowsiness. Get plenty of rest, stay hydrated, and avoid heavy meals to reduce fatigue. Wear sunglasses and use the visor to reduce sun glare.

OBSERVE PROPER SPEED FOR CONDITIONS

In adverse conditions, reduce speed by at least 2-3 mph below the flow of traffic, not to exceed the posted speed limit. Make accelerations gradually. Before entering ramps, curves, and turns, reduce speed by at least 10-15 mph or more below the posted speed limit, based on conditions, to avoid a rollover.

REACT PROPERLY TO HAZARDS

Do not use the engine brake or cruise control in slippery conditions. Be cautious of ice on bridges and pavement that looks wet but could be black ice. If driving conditions worsen, find a safe location to pull over and wait.

MAINTAIN PROPER FOLLOWING DISTANCE

Keep a minimum of six seconds following distance behind the vehicle in front, and add one second more for each additional hazard that is present, like snow, freezing rain, sun glare, or black ice.