



COLUMBIA COUNTY TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Columbia County Traffic Safety Commission Offers Winter Driving Tips

The Columbia County Traffic Safety Commission is reminding resident to be prepared for winter driving by offering the following safety tips:

1. Winter Readiness Kit. Making a winter preparedness kit is always wise when you know you are going to be out on the road, even for short trips. Below is a list of the items drivers will want to have with them:

- a. Bottle of water and some food (backpacking meals, food bars, etc)
- b. Tire chains and ties
- c. Jumper Cables
- d. Small tarp to kneel on and many other uses during an emergency
- e. Space or wool blanket
- f. Flashlight
- g. Road flairs
- h. Small shovel
- i. Gloves
- j. First Aid Kit
- k. A sandbag or two full of sand
- l. A good book...

Other vehicle tips include making sure your vehicle is in good running order and the battery is good. Always keep the gas tank at least half full when traveling, and make sure someone knows where you are going. For more ideas on how to be prepared, google Winter Driving Kit on the internet.

2. Plan Your Trip. It is often a good idea when you plan your trip to check out road conditions before your leave. One very handy website is Tripcheck.org, which can provide valuable information on road conditions for any short or long trips that you might be taking. This website provides roadside camera images and detailed and current information about Oregon road traffic, congestion, incidents, weather conditions, and services and much more.

3. Rain. Remember that rain can make roads slick by reducing tire friction in two ways. The rain can mix with oils on the road forming a slick solution and/or the water can float (hydro-plane) the tires off the road surface if the tire (vehicle) speed is great enough. This can occur at speeds as low as 35mph. When it has not rained in some time, be cautious as the built up oils and water can be very slick even during the summer. **And anytime there is water on the road surface, slow down to prevent hydro-planning.**

4. Frost. As the temperature drops to near freezing (32° F) roads can develop frost crystals, even though they appear to be bare and dry. Ice crystals reduce traction between the vehicles tires and the road surface creating slippery conditions that you don't expect. If your vehicle has a thermometer that measures the outside ambient air temperature, always be alert that when it gets to 33-34° F or lower, you will need to slow down and watch for sparkles from the ice crystals on the road and the road's shoulder. **Again, If you see ice crystals, slow down.**

5. Black Ice. Black ice can be extremely dangerous because you can't see it! Because you can't see it you can be in a slide before you actually realize you are driving through it! When temperatures are near freezing, be cautious of any location on the road that appears wet (the pavement will appear black). Black ice is extremely slick. Slow down prior to the location. If you find you are driving in conditions where there might be black ice, do not make any quick changes or jerking movements of the steering wheel, hitting the brakes, etc. **Just try to "glide" through the location making no quick movements.**

6. Elevation. Typically as you gain elevation the temperatures drop. Depending on other weather conditions, the drop can be anywhere between 3° F to 6° F per 1000 ft. gained. **So even though there is**

no ice or snow at your location (elevation), if you travel up into the hills, you may very well encounter it, so slow down.

7. Cold Air Sinks. Because cold air is heavier than warm air, it normally sinks to lower elevations. Some areas such as the Chapman area on Scappoose-Vernonia Road are known as cold-air sinks and these areas may be colder than areas even at higher elevations. Cold air may sit in these areas for days allowing frost or ice to develop, making roads slick. **Watch for frost or snow hanging around in an area longer than other areas, and slow down.**

8. Bridges. Bridges have no insulating material under them (soil or rock), and because of this lack of insulating material they will frost / freeze faster than main road surfaces. **Remember that when the temperature is near freezing, road surfaces on either side of the bridge may be fine but bridge crossings may be icy and slick. Slow down when approaching and crossing bridges.**

9. De-icer. ODOT and the County use a chemical de-icer (magnesium chloride) on some roads when the weather conditions are right. Once the road has been sprayed with de-icer, it can remain effective for up to 5 days. Be aware that rain will dilute and wash the de-icer off the road, so the timing of when to apply it is critical. Also, de-icer is only effective when the temperatures are within 15 ° of 32° F. De-icer works great, but don't trust it. **The de-icer may be old or diluted, or the temperature may be too low for it to be totally effective. So when the temperatures are at or near freezing, slow down.**

10. Sanding Rock. ODOT and the County use sanding rock during certain weather conditions to reduce slick and icy conditions. Sanding rock is what the County uses on most of the County roads. It is not affected by temperature or rain. However, as each vehicle passes over a sanded road, the tires bounce and throw the sand to the side of the road. After several hours of high volume traffic, most of the sand may be out of the lanes of traffic and not much use in preventing a car from sliding. **So when the temperatures are at or near freezing, even though the road has been sanded, slow down.**

11. Shadows and Shaded Areas. In many areas roads may be shaded throughout the day. In these areas the sun has not had an opportunity to warm the road and melt any frost or ice that may have formed during the night. So during the day, much of the road may be free of ice and frost, but these shaded areas can be extremely treacherous. **So when the temperatures are at or near freezing, slow down when coming into a shaded areas, even though most of the road is exposed to the sun and is clear and dry.**

12. Snow. Road crews work very hard to keep our roads clear of snow. However, during large, long snow events, keeping the roads free of snow and ice may not be possible. The Road Department prioritizes roads that need to be cleared for emergency purposes and they typically start snow clearing at the higher elevations first where the problems can be the greatest. As the priority roads are opened and cleared, the crews then begin working on secondary roads. During snow plowing periods, only limited sand will be used, and no de-icer. It is not efficient to sand a road, and then a few hours later plow it, thereby wasting the sand that was previously spread into the ditch with the snow. **Use appropriate traction devices on tires, slow down, and travel when only necessary.**

13. Ice. Remember, ice is extremely slick when the temperature is just a few degrees above or below freezing. If you encounter icy conditions while driving don't make any quick steering movements, as was described in #3. Metal studs or chains/cables on vehicle tires may help, but even they cannot be counted on. **When the roads are iced over, it is a very good idea to travel only when necessary.**

14. Mud on the Road. Many off road activities can cause mud to be tracked onto a road's surface. The amount of mud can be anything from just enough to "paint" the road a light brown, to a couple of inches. If the moisture content is just right, mud can be extremely slick. Watch for signs that off the road activities that may drag mud onto the road's surface. **When mud is seen on road surfaces, slow down in anticipation of encountering slick mud.**

15. Distracted Driving. One last thing, using your cell phone and/or sending a text message is extremely dangerous in normal driving conditions. Don't do it. With all of the snow and ice to contend with, adding these devices into the mix makes dangerous conditions even more dangerous. If you need to make a phone call or send a text message, be safe, pull off the road if the call or text message can't wait until you reach a safe place or your destination.

The Columbia County Traffic Safety Commission wishes all Columbia County residents a safe winter driving season.

