

December 2025 A Safer Naper
Winter Roadway Safety

Winter storms, bad weather and sloppy road conditions are inevitable parts of winter in Illinois. Educate yourself, prepare your vehicle and know what to do in emergency situations with the following tips this winter season.

Before You Go

- **Cell phone:** Make sure your cell phone is fully charged and always have a charger with you.
- **Clear your car completely:** Don't clear just a small section of your windshield. Make sure you can clearly see out of all your vehicle's windows before you start moving. Don't forget to also remove snow and ice from your headlights and taillights.
- **Check your vehicle:** Ensure your tires, battery, brakes, and fluids are in good condition.
- **Pack a winter safety kit:** Include items like an ice scraper, shovel, flashlight, blankets, extra warm clothes, snacks, water, jumper cables, a first-aid kit, and sand or kitty litter for traction.
- **Keep a full tank of gas:** This helps prevent condensation from forming, which can lead to frozen fuel lines. A full tank also ensures you have enough fuel to stay warm if you break down and or get stuck.
- **Clear your exhaust pipe:** Make sure it is not blocked by snow to prevent carbon monoxide from entering the vehicle.

Tips for Winter Driving

- **Stay home.** If road conditions are hazardous, avoid driving if possible. Only go out if necessary to avoid taking unnecessary risks on unsafe roadways.
- **Drive slowly.** Reduce your speed to account for less traction when driving on snow or ice.
- **Accelerate and decelerate slowly.** Apply the gas slowly to regain traction and avoid skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry, and take time to slow down for a stoplight. Remember: It takes longer to slow down on icy roads.
- **Increase following distance:** Give yourself much more space between your car and the one in front of you, potentially up to 8-10 seconds.
- **Avoid cruise control and self-driving modes:** Do not use cruise control or self-driving mode features on snow or ice as these systems cannot adapt quickly to sudden slippery conditions.
- **Technology:** Winter weather can block sensors, cameras, radar, and LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), reducing the effectiveness of advanced driver assistance systems and making it hard for vehicles to detect lane lines and obstacles.
- **Brake gently:** Apply steady, firm pressure to the brake pedal to avoid skidding. If you have an anti-lock braking system (ABS), brake firmly and the system will prevent the wheels from locking up.
- **Accelerate and steer smoothly:** Make all movements, including acceleration and turns, as slow and gentle as possible.
- **Beware of black ice:** Roads that seem dry may be slippery and dangerous. Watch for patches of ice that can form on clear-looking roads, especially on bridges and overpasses, which can freeze first and melt last.
- **Use low gears:** Use low gears to maintain traction, especially on hills.
- **Maintain a firm grip:** Keep both hands on the wheel at all times.

- **Don't pass snowplows:** Snowplows have low visibility, and the conditions around them are poor.
- **If you start to skid:** Steer gently in the direction of the skid until you regain traction

How To Prevent Skids

Rain, snow and ice can make roads slippery and dangerous to navigate. Skidding can occur when a vehicle's tires lose traction on the road surface and too much brake or acceleration is applied. While you cannot prevent every skid situation, minimize the chances of it happening by following these tips:

- Reduce your speed on wet roadways and especially when navigating turns.
- Do not brake fast by increasing the distance at which you follow other vehicles.
- Have your tires properly inflated. Tires that are over or underinflated can increase the risk of skidding because they don't grip the road properly therefore reducing traction.

Steps to Take when Skidding

- **Stay calm:** Avoid panicking and making sudden movements.
- **Take your foot off the pedals:** Do not brake or accelerate. Let off the gas and brake pedals.
- **Steer in the direction of the skid:** Look where you want the front of the car to go and turn the steering wheel in that direction.
- **Counter-steer:** As the vehicle straightens out, you may need to steer in the opposite direction to prevent over-rotating and fishtailing.
- **Return to center:** Once the vehicle is moving in the correct direction, straighten the steering wheel.
- **Resume control:** Gently and gradually apply the accelerator or brake as needed once you have regained traction.

What to do if involved in a car crash

Whether it's a minor fender bender or a serious collision, knowing what to do right after a crash can help make everyone safer, reduce stress, and ensure the situation is handled properly.

1) Ensure safety & remain calm

Stop your vehicle in a safe, well-lit public place that does not obstruct traffic, if you are able to do so and turn on your hazard lights. Check for injuries and ensure everyone is safe.

2) Call 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 immediately to report the accident. Even in minor accidents, it's essential to report the crash to law enforcement. Illinois law requires that a crash report be filed by the driver of a vehicle if the crash involves death, bodily injury, or property damage of more than \$1,500. If any vehicle involved in the crash is uninsured, a report must be filed if property damage is more than \$500 or more.

3) Move vehicles if possible

If no one is injured and vehicles are drivable, move them to the shoulder or a safe area. Turn on your hazard lights and follow the 9-1-1 dispatcher's instructions.

4) Remain inside your vehicle

If stopped near or on the road, remain inside until first responders arrive to avoid being struck by traffic.

5) Cooperate with police

When officers arrive, explain what happened, sticking to facts. Provide your driver's license and insurance. Do not discuss the crash with others.

6) The police report

The officer will give you a crash report number. A full report with driver, vehicle, insurance, and witness details will be available from the police records department.

In the City of Naperville, a police officer will respond to nearly every reported traffic crash, whether on private or public property. If the police can't get to the scene for some reason and the vehicles are drivable with no injuries, the 9-1-1 dispatchers may instruct you to file a police report in person at the police department.

If no officer is present, exchange key information with the other driver:

- Full name and contact information
- Insurance company and policy number
- Driver's license and license plate number
- Type, color and model of vehicle
- Location of accident

Insurance companies also have their best practices, so it is important to check with your individual carrier for any additional procedures or documentation they recommend at the accident scene.

Unattended Vehicles

If you are involved in a crash that causes damage to an unattended vehicle (no driver or passenger present) or other property:

- Stop your vehicle in an area away from traffic.
- Leave your name, address, phone number and license plate number on the vehicle or property if the owner cannot be found.
- Notify police.
- Complete all required crash reports.

Leaving the Scene of a Crash

A driver convicted of leaving the scene of a crash, especially if personal injuries or death occurs, is subject to criminal charges. In cases where a death or personal injury has occurred, the Illinois Secretary of State's office is required to revoke the individual's driver's license. In cases where damage is more than \$1,000, driving privileges will be suspended.

If you are the victim of a hit-and-run:

- Do not chase the other driver, this can cause another accident.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately and report that the driver fled the scene.
- Give the dispatcher as much detail as possible about the driver, vehicle, license plate, and direction of travel.

- An officer will be dispatched to take a crash report at the scene and attempt to locate the offending vehicle.

If you witness a crash

- If you witness a crash, make sure you are safe. Pull over carefully and turn on your hazard lights.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately and report the crash, giving details about the location and any visible injuries.
- Stay at the scene until police arrive to share your contact information and what you observed.