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Tips for driving in anything that Mother Nature sends your way

The only way to be guaranteed safety on icy and/or snowy roads is to not drive on them. Unfortunately, this isn't always possible. Most people who live in winter climates are expected to travel in all but the worst weather, and even then may have to venture out in an emergency.

Here are a few tips that will help you prepare for winter-weather driving:

- **Skids.** Avoid skids by accelerating and decelerating slowly. Regain control of your vehicle during a skid by steering out of it, not braking. Gently steer in the direction that you want to go. When you regain traction, begin to use the brake if it is necessary. Apply gentle pressure to the brake or, if you don't have antilock brakes, slowly push on the brake, release, and repeat.
- **Tires.** Tires grip the road and help drivers safely maneuver. Be sure your tread is safe for winter driving, and consider snow tires or chains if you live in a region that gets a lot of snow.
- **Speed.** Allow plenty of time to get to your destination. Remember that speed limits are set for ideal road conditions. If the weather is making it hard to control your vehicle and to see, slow down.
- **Snow removal.** Remove all snow and ice from your vehicle. Whatever you leave on your car can fly off and hit other vehicles or pedestrians. Snow and ice left on the roof of a car can also slide down and cover your back window, leaving you blind to what is behind you.
- **Space.** Leave extra space between vehicles in case your car skids when traffic stops.

Have a safe and happy holiday!

Here are a few tips from the National Safety Council that will help you have a safe and happy holiday:

- Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.
- Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat, but many plants may be poisonous or can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry, and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach.
- Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators, and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or doorways.
- Avoid placing breakable tree ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower branches, where small children or pets can reach them.
- If you buy an artificial tree, choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.

- Only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights outdoors). Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and loose connections. Replace or repair any damaged light sets.
- When putting up holiday decorations, always use the proper step stool or ladder to reach high places. Don't stand on chairs, desks, or other furniture.

When it comes to holiday toys, think about safety first

Hoverboards that spontaneously combust, bite-sized magnetic toys, crafting beads that contain the date-rape drug...in the last decade there's been no shortage of bad giftgiving ideas and poorly designed toys. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimated that there were 188,400 toy-related, emergency department-treated injuries in 2013 to children younger than 15 years old. The majority of toy-related fatalities were due to choking on small toys and small parts of larger toys.

Here are some safety tips from the CPSC and W.A.T.C.H. (World Against Toys Causing Harm, Inc.) to keep in mind when choosing toys this holiday season:

Magnets—Thanks to products like Magnetix and Buckyballs (which weren't marketed as toys, yet ended up being ingested by children), children's magnetic toys must meet stringent safety standards. Even so, toys with magnets should be kept away from young children.

Balloons—Children can choke or suffocate on deflated or popped balloons. Small balls and other toys with small parts—For children younger than age 3, avoid toys with small parts, which can cause choking.

Scooters and other riding toys—Riding toys, skateboards, hoverboards, bikes, and in-line skates are made to go fast and require skill to control. Falls can be deadly. Purchase with helmet and safety gear, and only if a young child will use the item while under adult supervision.

Realistic weaponry—There are toy manufacturers that actually make toy guns to be detailed replicas of real weapons, which has resulted in a number of deaths, said W.A.T.C.H. Though not available in mass-market stores, these realistic-looking toy guns can be found on Amazon and eBay.

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