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Governor

**Tom Church**  
Cabinet Secretary

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Press Release

## **New Mexico Department of Transportation Offers Safe Winter Driving Tips**

**Santa Fe** - You take a risk every time you get behind the wheel. Every eleven minutes, someone in the U.S. dies in a motor vehicle accident. When driving in wintry weather conditions, your risk is ten times greater.

Winter weather is right around the corner, and with it comes snow, ice and the hazards they can present to drivers.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation's main goal is safety and we want to ensure you are as safe as possible while behind the wheel. The department would like to offer you the following recommendations for safe winter driving:

- Make sure your vehicle is in good mechanical condition for winter driving conditions.
- Don't take a chance if you break down. Have basic winter supplies in your vehicle as an emergency kit (spare tire, jumper cables, jack, blanket, flashlight, flares, first-aid kit and food and water).
- Know your current road conditions. Visit the New Mexico Department of Transportation's [www.nmroads.com](http://www.nmroads.com) website for current road advisory information. You can also obtain that information by dialing 511 in state or 1-800-432-4269 out of state.
- Wear your seatbelt and make sure all passengers also "buckle up."
- Be patient. The best accident prevention on snow and ice is to slow down. Allow extra time to get to your destination and leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- Don't use cruise control. Using cruise control in the snow, ice or even rain is dangerous because if your vehicle hydroplanes or skids, it can accelerate and spin the wheels, attempting to maintain a constant speed.
- Whenever your visibility is reduced by rain, snow or fog, slow down and turn on your low-beam headlights or fog lights. Using your high beams only makes visibility worse by increasing the glare.

- If you find yourself using the lights of the vehicle in front of you as a guide to stay on the road, it's time to pull off the road, stop, turn on your emergency flashers and wait until conditions improve.

If you become stranded, never leave the vehicle. It provides protection from overexposure to the cold. Plus, a single person walking through the snow is harder to find than a stranded car or truck. Run the motor about ten minutes each hour for heat. Open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning and make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked. Most importantly, stay awake. If you doze off you are more likely to succumb to frostbite or hypothermia.

“Winter weather conditions can definitely pose a danger to motorists. I want to assure the public that our crews will work around the clock patrolling state roads, plowing snow, sanding and salting affected state maintained roads to keep them safe and clear,” said NMDOT Secretary Tom Church.

**Don't crowd the plow** – Snowplows plow far and wide and are usually spreading deicing materials from the back of truck. Watch for snowplows operating in either lane or direction. If you come up behind a snowplow working, don't get too close. Stay at least 50 feet back, so you are not hit by the sand or blowing snow. Snowplows may also need to stop or take evasive action to avoid stranded vehicles or unmarked obstacles. If you find yourself behind a snowplow, stay a safe distance behind it and use caution when passing. Remember, the road behind a snowplow will be safer to drive on.

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