



# AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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In many winter storms, the Amherst Police Department responds to numerous motor vehicle collisions. A lot of the collisions that we go to could be prevented.

Here are some tips that our Department recommends when driving this winter:

## **Winter Tires**

A good set of winter tires is essential for driving in our climate. We tend to get more melting and freezing events than in most parts of Canada and this can lead to very icy roadways. Roads tend to be more slippery at 0 degrees Celsius compared to -20 degrees Celsius. Make sure that you get four matching tires as mixing different brands can cause your vehicle to act differently on the roadway.

- While it is important to have your vehicle in good working order at all times of the year, it is very important that residents inspect their vehicles prior to the winter season and make sure that their lights and brakes are all in working order.

## **Windows/Visibility**

Reduced driver visibility can lead to collisions. I have stopped many vehicles which I observed with only a small portion of the windshield cleared, while the rest of the windows is covered in frost, ice and/or snow. Take the time to remove the snow from your vehicle and clear **ALL** windows before driving. It is an offence under Section 184(4) of the Motor Vehicle Act to drive a motor vehicle with an obstruction on a window or windshield. The fine for such an offence is \$169.91. In addition, ensure your vehicle has winter windshield wiper fluid and the wiper blades are working correctly.

## **Weather Awareness/Safe Travel Strategies**

Be aware of the weather forecast and plan your travel accordingly. Avoid driving during significant weather events. If you must travel during inclement weather, allow additional time so you do not feel rushed. Let people know your route and your estimated time of arrival.

Pack a winter survival kit which should include blankets, first aid kit, shovel and flares. A lighted candle should be added to the kit along with some matches in a water proof container. The lighted candle can provide much needed light and heat and also can be used to melt snow. A whistle can also be useful to attract attention of passer-bys. Wear warm clothes in case you have to be out in the weather for a long period. Make sure that these clothes do not restrict your driving movements. Always carry a fully charged cell phone so that you can

call for help.

The public is also advised to take care if they end up getting stuck into a snowbank while driving. Shovelling in the cold weather or attempting to push out a vehicle stuck in a snowbank has caused many people to experience cardiac incidents. The best course of action is to call for help and stay in the shelter of the vehicle if no other shelter is available. Make sure that the tail pipe is not plugged with snow as this will cause carbon monoxide to enter into the vehicle. The vehicle engine should be used as little as possible and make sure that a window is opened slightly to allow fresh air in.

### **Skid Control**

The arrival of winter increases the risk of vehicle skids. Skids are often caused when drivers are not paying attention and are required to make a sudden movement with the vehicle. The use of cruise control is not advisable during slippery road conditions as people tend to take their foot off the pedals which may cause them to quickly slam on them if trouble arises.

#### **Rear Wheel Drive**

The best way to get out of a rear wheel skid is to take your foot off the gas or brake pedal. Braking or accelerating may have been the reason why the skid started in the first place. The driver should then shift to neutral, and look down the road in the direction that they want the vehicle to go. The driver should then gently steer in that direction. For example if the rear tires begin to slide to the left, the driver should be steering towards the left. Be careful to not over steer as this will cause the vehicle to get into a slide in the opposite way.

#### **Front Wheel Drive**

Front wheeled skids are caused by excessive braking or fast accelerations and is caused when the traction is lost on the front wheels. This can cause problems as the driver will be unable to steer at this time. Drivers should either ease off the acceleration or ease off the brake, shift to neutral and then wait until the front wheels regain traction. Once traction is recovered, the driver can shift back to drive and accelerate normally.

#### **All-Wheel Drive**

In an all-wheel skid, drivers should take their foot off the brake or accelerator, shift to neutral and steer in the direction that they wish the vehicle to go. Once the tires regain traction, then the driver can shift back to drive.

The Amherst Police Department responded to 89 traffic collisions from November, 2012 to April 2013. Police have a role in reducing accidents, and this is accomplished through education and enforcement. The police are only part of the solution. The commitment of the public to safe driving practices is key. I wish everyone a safe winter driving season. I hope I do not meet you at an accident scene this winter.