

# Driver Letter

A MONTHLY MESSAGE FOR DRIVERS  
FROM THE [LOSS CONTROL ORGANIZATION OF THE HARTFORD](#)

January 2009



## Winter Driving

Dear Driver:

The best way to decrease the probability of a weather related collision in winter is to **SLOW DOWN**. The majority of weather related collisions are a result of driving too fast for conditions.

In addition to slowing down, consider the following special techniques to help minimize the hazards of winter driving:

Glare:

- Snow produces a glare with can adversely affect vision. The sun, shining on the snow, makes the problem worse. Keep a pair of sunglasses in your vehicle and use them.

Adjust Speed:

- **SLOW DOWN** and increase your space cushion (following distance). Apply the "3 Second Plus" rule. At a minimum, you should maintain a 4 second space cushion by adding an additional second for poor/slippery road conditions. The specific situation may indicate that the space cushion should be extended for one or two seconds more. Don't exceed a safe speed even if traffic is running at the posted speed limit. The posted speed limit is too fast during bad weather.
- Allow extra time for trips in inclement weather. Anticipate slower speeds and poor driving conditions.
- Snow banks create blind spots. Be cautious to look for pedestrians and vehicles entering intersections.
- ABS (Antilock Brake Systems): Antilock brake systems do not improve stopping distances on dry roads; they only improve control if your wheels lock up. On roads with slippery surfaces, both directional control and stopping distances are improved with ABS. With ABS, employ a slow steady squeeze on the brakes; do not pump your brakes. (A slow steady squeeze on the brake pedal is appropriate even if you do not have ABS).



- Electronic stability control (ESC) helps a driver maintain control. A driver loses control when the vehicle goes in a direction different from the one indicated by the position of the steering wheel. This typically occurs when a driver tries to turn on a slippery road. Then the vehicle may understeer or oversteer. What is ECS? Electronic stability control, or ESC, uses the speed sensors on each wheel and the ability to brake individual wheels that are the basis of antilock brakes. ESC adds a steering angle sensor, a vehicle rotation rate sensor that measures rotation around the vehicle's vertical axis, and a control unit. The control unit monitors when the steering and rotation sensors detect that the vehicle is about to travel in a direction different from the one indicated by the steering wheel position. Then ESC automatically brakes the appropriate wheel to help the driver maintain control. In many cases engine throttle also is reduced. (Read your vehicle owner's manual on instructions when to disengage the ESC – normally in the event your vehicle becomes stuck in mud, snow, ice, etc.)

### Communicate:

- Headlights – During periods of ice and snow, periodically clean your headlights, turn signals and brake lights to ensure visibility. Use low beam during storms. Turn your headlights on. They won't do any good if they are off. Two rules of thumb:
  - If you have to turn on your windshield wipers, you should also turn on your headlights.
  - If 10% or more of the traffic has their lights on you should turn on your headlights.
- Directional signals – Always use your directional signals when making turns or changing lanes.
- 4 way flashers – If you must pull off the side of the road or driving significantly below the speed limit, consider turning on your 4 way flashers.

### Skidding:

- Slow down – If you feel you are losing traction, take your foot off the accelerator and slow down. Don't panic. Accelerate smoothly once traction is regained. Maintain a safe speed.
- Steering – If you do start to skid, turn the wheel in the direction you want your vehicle to go. Steering is more important than braking in some instances. Plan ahead; determine where your vehicle should go in an emergency. Give yourself plenty of road and look for an "out". Maintain an adequate space cushion around your entire vehicle.

### Traction:

- To retain traction and avoid skidding – Start out slowly if stopped on a slippery surface. If your wheels start spinning, let up on the accelerator until traction is returned.

Remember to wear your seatbelt as well as requiring ALL your passengers to wear theirs.

**SLOW DOWN AND INCREASE YOUR SPACE CUSION!**

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## Resources

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