**Winter Driving Talking Points**

**Key Messages**

1. **Winter driving can be challenging.**

* In the past five years, officers reported snowy or icy road conditions in more than 78,336 crashes (2015-2019).
* These crashes resulted in 180 traffic deaths and 19,644 injuries.

1. **When it comes to winter driving, take these steps before you head out:**

* Clear snow and ice from vehicle windows, hood, headlights, brake lights and directional signals. Drive with lights on for best visibility.
* If the conditions are too poor, do not travel if not necessary.
* Buckle up — best defense in a vehicle.
* If taking a trip, tell someone at your destination of your expected arrival time and your travel route.
* Make sure you have emergency items such as scraper/brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain and a bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction. Blanket(s), heavy boots, warm clothing and flashlights are also important. Keeping food and bottled water in the vehicle is also a good idea in the event you become stranded in a snow storm.

1. **Once you’re on the road, be smart about how you’re driving.**

* Drive at safe speeds according to road conditions, and give yourself plenty of travel time. Be patient, there will be traffic.
* Increase stopping distance between vehicles.
* Use extra precautions when driving around snowplows by keeping at least five car-lengths behind plows.
* If skidding, remain calm, ease foot off the gas and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.
* If vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply a steady firm pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump ABS brakes.
* The law required drivers to turn on headlights when there is precipitation.
* Do not use cruise control on snow/icy/wet roads.
* Move over for flashing lights. Law enforcement, tow trucks and other emergency vehicles will be assisting motorists who are involved in crashes or become stranded. Always look for flashing lights and move over at least one lane as soon as possible to protect yourself and those working on the side of the road. If you cannot move over, slow down.

**Talking Points**

During the winter, it’s important to drive at safe speeds according to road conditions, and give yourself plenty of travel time. Be patient, there will be traffic.

Increase stopping distance between vehicles. Expect bridges and overpasses to be icy during winter conditions and slow down accordingly.

Use extra precautions when driving around snowplows by keeping at least five car-lengths behind plows.

If skidding, remain calm, ease foot off the gas and turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.

If vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), apply a steady firm pressure to the brake pedal. Never pump ABS brakes.

Headlights must be turned on when there is precipitation present, it’s the law.

Do not use cruise control on snow/icy/wet roads.

During the winter or any other time of the year remember to pay attention, buckle up, drive the speed limit and never drive drunk.

**Black Ice**

Roads may be clear of snow and ice, but in extreme colds, ice can form that we cannot see. No matter what the conditions, drive at safe speeds and be aware a winter road can pose a danger.

**Child Safety**

Child safety restraints — make sure child restraints are secured tight enough. It is recommended for parents and caregivers to use bulky clothes and blankets above the child restraint harness, not beneath, to ensure harness restraints fit properly.

**Equip Your Vehicles**

Always keep in your vehicle a scraper/brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain and a bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction. Blanket(s), heavy boots, warm clothing and flashlights are also important, as are storing high-energy foods such as chocolate or energy bars.

**If Stranded**

Never leave your vehicle. Call 911, buckle up and stay in your car, it’s the safest place to be while waiting for help.

**Teen Drivers**

Parents of teen drivers should make sure new motorists experience snow and ice driving in a safe environment, such as an empty parking lot. Get your teen as much practice as possible before heading letting them heat out onto the streets.

**Visibility**

Be aware of visibility issues — large piles of snow blocking intersections. Be cautious.

**Darker Days**

Also, as we lose daylight, be extra alert:

* Look out for pedestrians, who could be walking on roads rather than unclear sidewalks. If you’re walking, do your part to wear reflective gear and cross where it’s is safe.