

Winter 2007

FOR RELEASE AT WILL

Let's Talk Winter Roadway Safety

The Nebraska Department of Roads wants to tell you about their hopes for this winter's driving season. They hope you, your loved ones, and their snowplow drivers will all stay safe. To help remind motorists how important it is to be prepared and to drive according to the conditions, the State Roads Department is focusing on the new nationwide winter driving slogan..."Ice & Snow -- Take It Slow."

There are so many things a driver should know and focus on when it comes to ensuring motorist and passenger safety during winter conditions. There are seasonal words like winter storm watch, winter storm warnings, blowing and drifting snow advisory, black ice, and snow cloud that are used to describe the various conditions. These terms and many other helpful winter driving safety reminders can be found on the website:

<http://www.dor.state.ne.us/rca/wz/winter-page.htm>.

Don't take chances...know before you go! In Nebraska and several surrounding states, you can dial 511 free, year-round, day or night for travel condition information. Primarily timely weather reporting for specific travel areas, the 511 Nebraska Travel Information line also has neighboring states' reports available at this number. If you are outside of the state and wish to check on Nebraska's current conditions, dial 800-906-9069.

State Highway Operations and Maintenance personnel will be ready to tackle winter weather challenges across the state. Although crews are well prepared, they are not magicians. Motorists should watch for dispatched snowplows when snow has fallen and winds are calm enough for the operators to see. It is unlawful to follow more closely than 100 feet when it is plowing snow, spreading salt or sand or displaying a flashing amber or blue light. Drive with your lights on so you can be seen and do not attempt to pass a plow until the plow reaches a clear area. Snowplows usually leave a ridge of snow and swirling snow can add to the hazards of passing or following too closely.

Since winter in Nebraska is bound to be full of surprises, snow and slippery slopes, the Nebraska Department of Roads urges motorists to make sure everyone in their vehicle is wearing a safety belt. Remember -- Don't take chances! Ice and snow means take it slow.

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Contact:

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Coffee Break Topics

According to the Nebraska Department of Roads, two issues stressed by winter operations personnel and responding agencies during area-wide planning meetings were first - keep urging motorists not to use cruise control during winter weather. The use of a vehicle's cruise control while weather conditions are changing can be very hazardous. A driver not being in control, traveling too fast for conditions and the quick speed adjustments when turning cruise control on or off can easily send a vehicle out-of-control if temperature and moisture conditions are right.

Second – towing and retrieval efforts are another consideration when choosing to travel during inclement winter weather conditions. Some highways and the Interstate are very busy transportation arteries and can become a risk for those performing automobile or truck retrieval. Law enforcement officials and some towing operators will follow the practice of “Unless vehicles are in the traveled way or a hazard, vehicles will not be retrieved until after the storm is over, or when possible during a closure.”

The Department of Roads, responding State Patrol officers, county sheriffs' personnel, local police, towing companies, the Red Cross, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and others want to get the word out that in order to save lives this winter, think twice: 1. When it's snowing, should you be going? 2. If you must go, ice and snow means take it slow!

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