CAP heath & wellness briefing: Winter Driving Safety

Winter weather affects large portions of the country and simple preparation can reduce the risk to drivers in all areas.

1. "Three P's" we are discussing include:

* Prepare your car
* Protect yourself
* Prevent an accident

1. Prepare your car before a winter storm arrives

* Check your battery to ensure starting ability
* Fill windshield washer
* Check windshield wipers
* Check the tires on the car
  + Ensure adequate tread
  + Drivers in areas with frequent winter snow should consider specific winter tires
    - May be studded
    - Rubber composition is stickier for improved traction
    - More aggressive tread pattern
    - Wear faster than other tires
    - Consider placing winter tires on all four wheels
  + Drivers where snow is uncommon can use all weather tires
* Assemble an Emergency Supply Kit

1. Emergency Supply Kit

* Flashlight with spare batteries
* Flares
* Kitty litter (for traction if stuck)
* Jumper cables
* Snow brush and ice scraper
* Snow shovel
* Blankets
* Reflective vest
* First aid kit
* Fire extinguisher

1. When the storm hits

* Don't use parking brake
  + It may not fully release if frozen
* Keep gas tank full
  + Prevent condensation of moisture in the tank
* Warm up car before driving
* Don't use cruise control
  + Avoid loss of traction and control on icy patches
* FULLY clear snow and ice from windows
  + Don't forget the side windows
* Decreased visibility use your headlights
  + Let other traffic see you

1. Safe driving techniques

* Don't stop on hills if at all possible, may be impossible to start up again.
* Start slowly, don’t spin your tires.
* Allow extra time and distance to stop
* Burn your headlights
* Four-wheel drive helps you start but won't help you stop
* Practice driving your car in snow on an open space if you are inexperienced
* Braking
  + Antilock brakes -- DON'T pump your brakes
  + "old fashioned" brakes -- Pump your brakes to avoid locking
* If you skid, steer into the skid to regain control

1. If you are stuck or stalled

* Stay in your car if possible
* Turn on interior light at night
* Place a bright marker on your car
* Use flares to warn oncoming traffic
* Clear the exhaust pipe if you run your car while stopped to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning

7. Prepared for a possible emergency:

* Let someone know where you are going and your planned route
* Dress for the possibility that you might have to get out of your car into the weather
  + Boots
  + Winter Jacket
  + Hat and gloves

8. Drive defensively:

* Slow down if conditions indicate
* Increase the spacing between the car in front of you
* Four wheel drive will help you go but not help you stop
* Watch for pedestrians
* Avoid distractions while driving
* Avoid fatigue
* Wear sunglasses if the sun is bright