



## The “cold” facts on winter driving

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Imagine spending Christmas week with your family and introducing them to your new fiancé. Your family tells you that you seem the happiest you’ve been in your entire life.

You’re a second lieutenant, having chosen the Army as a good way to start your life. You know in a couple of months you’ll be in theater with your unit, but you’re confident. You’ve always set high goals for yourself and achieved remarkable success.

As you go to bed that Friday night, you’re full of happiness at your impending marriage and confidence as you face the challenges of your upcoming deployment.

Then Saturday morning arrives. It’s snowing outside, just like it should be the day after Christmas. You head out in your car with your sweetheart, planning to drive out of the chilly north to a much more temperate Florida.

Your car offers good performance, making it a pleasure to drive—but there’s a problem today. While you have ample power, snow has put a slippery barrier between your tires and the asphalt. Your tires lose traction, sending your car sliding toward the guardrail to your right. You struggle to regain control, but can’t.

The last thing you hear is your fiancé’s scream just before impact. And then it’s over. Ambulances come to the accident scene. One takes your fiancé to the hospital, where her injuries are treated and she survives.

It’s a pity you weren’t as fortunate. Forget the happiness of placing the ring on your bride’s finger. Forget the camaraderie of Soldiers who’ve faced combat and successfully met their mission. Ironically, it wasn’t combat hazards that killed you; it was stuff you discounted while comfortably riding in your car on familiar roads.

This young Soldier wasn’t the only one to lose his life on snow-covered roads last winter. Two others died when their pickup traveled out of control and slid into the path of a tractor-trailer. They had safely driven the road countless times before. Sometimes, confidence can morph into complacency and deliver a deadly sucker punch.

The Weather Channel offers the following tips to help you meet weather challenges and safely complete your trip.

## Driving safely on icy roads

- Decrease speed and leave plenty of room to stop. Allow at least three times more road than usual between you and the car in front of you.
- Brake gently to avoid skidding.
- Turn on your lights to increase your visibility to other motorists.
- Keep your lights and windshield clean.
- Use low gears to keep traction, especially on hills.
- Don't use cruise control or overdrive on icy roads.
- Be especially careful on bridges, overpasses and infrequently traveled roads, which will freeze first. Even at temperatures above freezing, you might encounter ice in shady areas or on exposed roadways like bridges during wet conditions.
- Don't pass snow plows and sanding trucks. These drivers have limited visibility, and you'll likely find the road in front of them worse than the road behind.
- Don't assume your vehicle can handle all conditions. Even four-wheel and front-wheel drive vehicles can encounter trouble on winter roads.

As a Soldier, Family member or Civilian, you have the Travel Risk Planning System available to help you get where you're going safely. Log in to TRiPS and follow the easy directions to see things you can do to reduce your risk. By taking an overall look at your travel plans, TRiPS alerts you to dangers you may not be aware of and evaluates the hazards they pose.

More information on POV safety and many other fall and winter safety topics is available online at <https://safety.army.mil> under the Fall/Winter Safety Campaign tab.