

WINTER DRIVING

What Employers Need to Know



Information for fleets that operate company or personally-owned/leased passenger cars and light duty trucks

Understand the Risks

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of traumatic workplace deaths in British Columbia. Winter conditions – such as freezing temperatures, rain, snow, black ice and reduced daylight hours – can present serious challenges for occupational drivers, whether they drive a vehicle full time, or just as part of their job.

Every employer in B.C. must ensure the health and safety of all workers. As an employer, it is your responsibility to establish and maintain an effective safety program that addresses the risks and hazards your workers and contractors face when driving either a company or personal vehicle for work purposes.

If your organization operates company-owned motor vehicles – or directs workers to use their personal vehicles for work purposes – the following information will help you comply with your legal health and safety duties and reduce the risk associated with driving during the winter driving season (October 1 to April 30).

Note: This information is primarily designed for fleets that operate passenger cars or light-duty trucks. If your organization operates commercial vehicles with a GVW in excess of 5000 kg, please consult other information sources at ShiftIntoWinter.ca.

Comply With Your Legal Responsibilities as an Employer

- You are legally responsible for the safety of your workers. Know your responsibilities as an employer under the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR). (Visit BCLaws.ca and WorkSafeBC.com for more information.)
- As an employer, you must meet the standard and tests of “due diligence.” (You must take all reasonable care to protect the well-being of employees.)
- If you have a fleet, you must have an occupational road safety program as part of your health and safety program.
- Identify (in consultation with your workers, supervisors, safety representative or joint health and safety committee members) driver, journey, and vehicle hazards and implement effective risk control measures.
- Provide your workers with information, instruction, training and supervision to ensure their health and safety when behind the wheel. Ensure your workers are made aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable occupational driving hazards.
- Direct your drivers to comply with their responsibilities under the Workers Compensation Act (WCA), the OHSR, and train them to comply with the B.C. Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) and Motor Vehicle Act Regulations (MVAR). If your workers drive outside of B.C., make sure they follow the road safety laws in those jurisdictions.
- Ensure your workers are made aware of their workplace safety rights and responsibilities including the right to refuse unsafe work.
- Review and update your safety program, practices and procedures annually or following a motor vehicle incident.

The following information sets out steps and actions you can take to help meet your legal obligations and improve safety for workers who drive during the winter.

Determine When Work Driving is Necessary

Where possible, eliminate the hazards associated with winter driving by first exhausting all other means of conducting business (e.g., by e-mail, telephone, video conferencing, making use of public transportation etc.). By limiting vehicle trips, you will keep your workforce safe, reduce costs and improve the environment.

When Driving is Necessary

Safe trips are planned trips. When driving is required:

- Prepare your drivers.
- Prepare your fleet and grey fleet vehicles (personal cars driven for work purposes).
- Ensure that your workers drive for the conditions.



Prepare Your Drivers

- As an employer it is your responsibility to assess the driving competency of your workers and ensure they receive adequate instruction on how to drive safely in winter conditions.
- Provide new and young workers with safety orientation and basic driver training before they operate fleet, pool or personal vehicles for work purposes.
- Provide your supervisors and workers with information to help them understand the importance of safe seasonal driving. (Visit [ShiftIntoWinter.ca](https://www.shiftintowinter.ca) for more information.)
- When driving is necessary plan the safest route. Instruct supervisors and employees to check current weather and road conditions before driving, at [DriveBC.ca](https://www.drivebc.ca) or other sites.
- Encourage your supervisors and workers to revise work travel schedules during hazardous conditions.
- Provide external winter driving training to your workers. Many vehicle crashes are caused by human error.
- Instruct workers to conduct a vehicle pre-trip inspection each time they drive.
- Develop and manage a working-alone procedure for your workers.
- Develop procedures that instruct workers on what to do if they are stranded. Include specific directions (e.g., stay with the vehicle for safety and warmth; carry a cell phone to call for roadside assistance or 911 in an emergency.)
- Encourage discussion of road safety issues, such as winter driving, at safety meetings. Conduct quick safety “tool-box talks” at the start of each shift.
- Observe workers to ensure that they continue to follow safe work practices or procedures. Make informal inspections to ensure they are being followed.
- Consider the use of a signed “driver’s pledge” as evidence of your commitment and workers’ commitment to driving safety.

Prepare Your Fleet

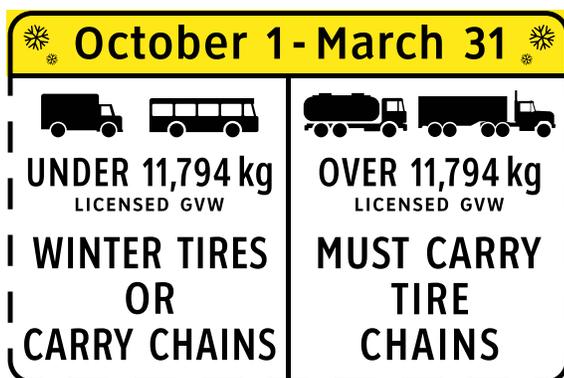
The following applies to both traditional and personal fleets:

- Ensure that vehicles are safe and suitable for purpose.
- Prepare your fleet for winter. Ensure that vehicles are inspected (before each shift), maintained and operated in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions, safe work practices and the Motor Vehicle Act.
- Consider the purchase of vehicles with better crash and equipment safety ratings. See <https://www.icbc.com/road-safety/safer-drivers/Pages/Buying-a-safer-vehicle.aspx> for more information.
- Give each vehicle a pre-winter check-up. Make sure tires, battery, brakes, cooling and heating systems, electrical and exhaust systems and belts and hoses are in good working order. Switch to winter wiper blades.
- Train and instruct workers to conduct a pretrip inspection to make sure all equipment is in good working order. This includes scraping snow and ice from windows, lights, mirrors and vehicle surfaces before driving. In addition, windows should be completely defrosted.
- Instruct workers to check tire pressure regularly. Tire pressure drops in colder conditions.
- Ensure vehicles are equipped with four matched winter tires that carry the three-peaked mountain and snowflake logo and that all tires are in good condition. Winter tires provide better traction



in cold weather (7°C or less) and in snow, slush, and icy conditions. Less effective mud and snow tires are also acceptable. Encourage and support the installation of winter tires on your “grey fleet” (personal cars and trucks driven for work purposes) vehicles.

- Drivers must obey winter tire and chain signs throughout the province from October 1 to March 31. For select highways, including mountain passes and rural routes in high snowfall areas, the date is extended until April 30 to account for early-spring snowfall.
- If tire chains are to be used, ensure that drivers are trained on how to safely install them. In addition, develop procedures on ideal locations (away from busy roads) where workers can safely chain up.
- Instruct workers to keep gas tanks full to avoid condensation which can cause fuel lines to freeze.
- Provide each vehicle a winter survival kit that includes an appropriate first aid kit, an approved vest, additional windshield washer fluid, flares, matches or a lighter, shovel, traction mat, sandbags (for extra weight and traction), flashlight and extra alkaline batteries, battery jumper cables, spare tire, wheel wrench and a jack.



Direct Workers to Drive for the Conditions

- Allow extra time for work travel. Encourage workers to adjust their schedules so they aren't rushing to get to their destination.
- Encourage your workers to slow down. Posted speed limits are for ideal road conditions; drivers must reduce speed depending on the conditions.
- Encourage your workers to increase the distance between their vehicle and the vehicle driving in front of them.
- Inform workers to use caution when approaching and not to pass highway maintenance equipment.
- Instruct your drivers to be aware of challenges such as limited visibility, pedestrians and cyclists wearing dark clothing.
- Instruct your workers about the hazards of seasonal rain and fog:
 - Light rain mixed with residual oil can make road conditions slick.
 - Heavy rain creates conditions ideal for hydroplaning.
 - Fog can reduce visibility of the road ahead to as little as the front of the vehicle. Driving in fog should be avoided whenever possible.
- Instruct your workers about the hazards of snow and ice:
 - Hard-packed snow on a road can be as slippery as ice. Snow can also be rutted and full of hard tracks.
 - Wet snow can make for slushy roads. Heavy slush can build up in the wheel wells of a vehicle and can affect steering.
 - Slush and spray from other vehicles can cause sudden loss of visibility.
 - Ice forms on roads in shaded areas, on bridges and overpasses – these sections of road often freeze much sooner and stay frozen long after the sun has risen.
 - Sections of the road that appear black and shiny have frosted over and can cause a vehicle to suddenly lose traction.

Ongoing Follow Up

- Monitor the performance of your winter driving program and policies. (Documentation is an essential element of an effective road safety and health and safety program.)
- Conduct seasonal maintenance reviews and vehicle checks in the fall and spring. Include personal vehicles used for work-related driving. Review vehicle maintenance procedures and information at health and safety meetings.
- Communicate disciplinary measures for not complying with the organization's driving policy.

Leadership is Key

- Show your commitment to occupational road safety and workplace safety; your support sets the tone for positive work practices adopted by your supervisors and drivers.
- Communicate your commitment to safety to the entire organization; employees need to see that senior management is committed to road safety.
- Support your managers and supervisors – assist them to make safe decisions about when workers should travel during winter.
- Reward or acknowledge safe actions taken by your supervisors and drivers.
- Encourage input on driving safety from supervisors and workers. Discuss “near miss” motor vehicle incidents.
- Lead by example – drive safely, at work and at leisure. Support and follow the rules set out in your company's safety program.

Assess the Risks, Identify Hazards, Develop Strategies

- Perform a yearly safety review to identify driver, trip, vehicle and environmental risk factors.
- Identify hazards – such as seasonal weather conditions, vehicle condition and road hazards – and develop policies and procedures to keep your drivers safe. Seek input from your drivers.
- Depending on the size of your business, develop a written strategy and/or an action plan to eliminate or reduce driving risks.
- For more information on risks, hazards and strategies, visit RoadSafetyAtWork.ca.

Additional Resources

ShiftIntoWinter.ca

DriveBC.ca

WorkSafeBC.com

RoadSafetyAtWork.ca

ICBC.com

Disclaimer. This tip sheet does not take the place of professional occupational health and safety advice and is not guaranteed to meet the requirements of applicable laws, regulations, and rules, including workplace health and safety laws and motor vehicle and traffic laws. The members of the Winter Driving Safety Alliance and their respective employees, officers, directors or agents (collectively the "WDSA") assume no liability for or responsibility for any loss or damage suffered or incurred by any person arising from or in any way connected with the use of or reliance upon the information contained in this tip sheet including, without limitation, any liability for loss or damage arising from the negligence or negligent misrepresentation of any of the WDSA in any way connected with the information contained in this tip sheet. The information provided in this tip sheet is provided on an "as is" basis. WDSA does not guarantee, warrant, or make any representation as to the quality, accuracy, completeness, timeliness, appropriateness, or suitability of any of the information provided, and disclaims all statutory or other warranties, terms, or obligations of any kind arising from the use of or reliance upon the information provided, and assumes no obligation to update the information provided or advise on future developments concerning the topics mentioned. (02-2019)