

Winter Driving Tips

From your Latah County Sheriff's Office

Winter driving can bring out the worst in all of us. We have places to go and we need to be there now. We're stressed about shopping and lines and money spent, and now the bozo in front of us is driving ten miles below the speed limit and doesn't have his lights on! Where is a traffic cop when you need one! Instead of tailgating or risking an unsafe pass, here are some solid driving tips to get home safely:

- **Avoid Road Rage:** If you feel yourself becoming agitated by other drivers on the road, pull over safely, let them pass, take a few deep breaths and reenter the roadway only after you are calm and ready to drive alertly. It is **never** a good idea to pass a slow driver when road conditions make it risky or slam on your brakes if you are being followed by a tailgater. Chances are very good that those "slow-pokes" out there are driving to the best of their ability and are only trying to get home safely themselves, and teaching someone a lesson might come at too steep a price.
- **Drive Alertly:** It goes without saying that you shouldn't drink and drive or drive when you're tired or emotional, but chemical inebriation and mood aren't the only factors in driving alertly. A lot of people drive slower in the winter for good reason, but if you find yourself holding up traffic, curb others' road rage by curbing your vehicle: pull over safely and allow other cars to pass. Only pull back into traffic when it is safe to do so.
- **Plan Ahead:** What's the best way to avoid being late when traffic is slow? Leave early! Plan all your trips (even to the store or to work) with it already in mind that you are going to be faced with delays. If you end up at work "too early," use the time to check your engine and make sure all your lights are in working order.
- **Prepare Your Vehicle:** It's never good to find out you're out of washer fluid just after a semi drives by and splashes road muck across your windshield. Check you engine, wipers, tires, brakes, and any other components before you leave your driveway. It is also a good idea to keep a safety kit in the trunk with flares, warm gear, and other things you might need in case you become stranded or are involved in a collision.
- **Use Your Turn Signals:** Anytime you make a lateral maneuver on the roadway, you need to use your turn signal. This includes signaling when you merge into a lane and when you change lanes. Be sure to signal your intentions far enough in advance that other drivers have enough time to slow down behind you.

Do not take on the role of *enforcer* by driving your car in a way that lets other drivers know you are mad at how they're driving. If someone is driving recklessly, call your local law enforcement with your **location**, a **description of the driver**, a **vehicle description**, and with the **license plate number**. And most importantly in order to have a safe and happy holiday season:

Buckle Up!