

Gov. Dave Heineman recently discussed winter weather safety tips. .

“During a winter storm, blowing and drifting snow can cause reduced visibility and affect road conditions,” said Gov. Heineman. “The best way to keep your family and yourself safe is by being prepared for winter weather before it strikes.”

The best way to keep your family and yourself safe is by being prepared for winter weather before it strikes. Listen to weather forecasts regularly, and check your emergency supplies whenever a period of extreme cold is predicted. Have a week’s worth of food and safety supplies available at home. Remember, your primary concern is staying warm.

Before planning any kind of trip this winter, it is important to monitor local media outlets and check 511 the Nebraska Advanced Traveler Information System. Most Nebraskans are familiar with the statewide 511 system for road conditions. It provides 24-Hour weather and travel Information by dialing 511. It is free of charge whether you use your cell phone or your land line.

Neighboring states are available on our system. If outside of Nebraska use 800-906-0069 to get Nebraska’s system. If on your pc or mobile device the website is www.511nebraska.gov.

“The Department of Roads is prepared to respond as winter weather comes calling,” said Dir., Randy Peters. “Snowplows operate around-the-clock on the state’s heavily traveled highways, based on the actual conditions at the time it snows.”

During a winter storm, the Nebraska State Patrol works closely with the Department of Roads to determine road conditions with the goal of keeping our roads open. However, winter weather conditions often force road closures. This is for the safety of the motoring public and to allow snow removal crews to clear roadways so that travel can resume.

“Awareness plays a crucial role in safe travel during the winter months,” said Colonel David Sankey.

The Nebraska State Patrol and Nebraska Department of Roads offer a few safety tips:

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Never drive faster than conditions allow.
- Never use cruise control in wet, slick, or snow packed conditions.
- Increase following distance, so that you can react to other vehicles around you.
- Drive with your headlights on and make sure all vehicle lights and windows are clear of snow.
- Travel during daylight hours and use well-traveled routes, giving yourself plenty of time to reach your destination.
- Let others know where you are going, when you will arrive, and what route you will be taking.
- If you do become stranded while traveling, stay with your car until help arrives. Wind chill and freezing temperatures can be life threatening.
- If you become trapped in a winter storm while driving, stay in your car. Run your engine for a few minutes every hour to reheat the interior of your car, making sure your exhaust pipe is not blocked. Keep a window cracked to prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide.
- Tie a very visible item such as a red handkerchief to the highest point on your vehicle, often the antenna. This will keep you visible to rescuers.

Motorists should have a winter weather survival kit in in the trunk or secured in cargo area of their vehicle.

- Emergency first aid kit
- Ice scraper, shovel, small bag of sand or abrasive material
- Flashlight, extra batteries (optional-portable radio)

- Blankets or sleeping bag (extra set dry clothing)
- Nonperishable snacks (high energy or dehydrated foods)
- Jumper cables
- Empty coffee can or plastic container
- Brightly colored cloth (red) to attach to car to signal help is needed
- Fully charged cell phone

Travelers in need of non-emergency roadside assistance, are encouraged to utilize the Nebraska State Patrol Highway Helpline by dialing *55 from their cell phone when safe to do so, or 1-800-525-5555 from any landline.