



Road Users 'Are You Ready For Winter?'

As winter is here, Kerry County Council is asking road users to make sure they are ready for winter road conditions.

Ms. Michelle Mullane, Road Safety (Education) Officer with Kerry County Council said "Driving during the winter months creates a multitude of different challenges with more hours of darkness and poorer weather conditions. Extreme weather is also a particular hazard at this time which can range from freezing fog, gale force winds, heavy rain, flooding and ice and snow".

Drivers are urged to service their vehicles and check them to ensure they are ready for the winter. Ms. Mullane said: "Drivers should consider servicing their vehicle to make sure it is fit and safe for winter driving. A few simple precautions can ensure the safety of you and your family on the roads this winter. Do not get caught out if severe weather strikes again - make the necessary checks on your vehicle now."

Ms. Mullane added: "The key this winter is to slow down and remain a safe distance behind the car in front of you. Using dipped headlights too during the daytime will make it easier for other road users to see you, so do not wait for darkness."

Pedestrians and cyclists are also encouraged to get ready for winter. To be safe on the roads at winter, a pedestrian or cyclists must be seen. That means ensuring the lights on the bike are working properly and using a torch when out walking. A high-visibility jacket is also an essential piece of clothing which will ensure you stand out in traffic. Pedestrians are also reminded to use footpaths where provided, if there is no footpath, walk facing oncoming traffic and never walk on a dual carriageway or motorway, use pedestrian crossings where provided.

There are a number of simple precautions that should be taken for driving over the winter months:

- **Use your lights.** Motorists are advised to use dipped head lights during the day so you are easily seen. Headlights and tail lights should be clean

and in working order. Ensure the beam on your head lights is adjusted correctly to avoid dazzling other drivers unnecessarily. Only use fog lights in foggy conditions and do not forget to turn them off after they have been used in fog and mist.

- **Check your tyres...they are your only contact with the road.** Car tyres should be above the minimum legal thread depth of 1.6mm but need to be changed before they get this worn. It is advisable to replace tyres when they reach 3mm and not to buy second hand tyres as you cannot be sure of its history. The legal limit for motorcycle tyres is 1mm and again should be replaced before they get this worn. Tyres need to be at the manufacturers recommended level to give the motorist the best chance in extreme conditions.
- **Safe Distance.** It takes longer to stop a car during the winter weather, so slow down and allow extra distance between you and the car in front. Remember, only a fool breaks the 2 second rule!
- **Understand your brakes.** Check your car manual and find out if your vehicle has safety assist technology such as Electronic Stability Control (ESC) or Anti Lock Braking System (ABS). Learn how these technologies can assist your driving in harsh weather conditions.
- **Make sure you can clearly see.** All too often motorists do not de-fog or de-ice windows and mirrors which can compromise visibility. This winter make sure windows and mirrors are clear, and carry a de-icer and screen scraper in the car. Do not use boiling water as this can crack the windscreen. Wipers are especially important for driving this winter; they need to be checked for wear and tear, and replaced if necessary;
- **Be prepared.** During these winter months it is advised that motorists carry a number of essentials in the boot of their car, should severe weather strike again this year.
 - a) High visibility vest
 - b) Appropriate footwear in case you need to leave your vehicle e.g. boots
 - c) A hazard warning triangle
 - d) Spare wheel
 - e) Tow Rope
 - f) A shovel
 - g) De-icing equipment (for glass and door locks)
 - h) Spare bulbs
 - i) First aid kit
 - j) A fire extinguisher
 - k) A working torch
 - l) A car blanket, additional clothing & some food and water

- m) It is recommended that drivers keep their fuel tanks topped up especially in times of adverse weather conditions!. You do not want to run out of fuel on a journey in bad weather.
- **In the event of a breakdown.** Drivers need to ensure their vehicle is well in off the road so as not to obstruct other vehicles. The driver should also put on their hazard warning lights. If the vehicle breaks down on the motorway pull in as far as you can, alerting traffic behind you with hazard lights. The driver should leave their vehicle, get behind the barrier (on the embankment) and call the Gardaí, on their mobile phone or roadside telephone.
 - **Beware of “Black Ice”.** Black Ice is one of winter’s biggest hazards as it is difficult to see. Watch out for sheltered/ shaded areas on roads, under trees and near high walls.
 - **And most importantly, Keep up to date.** Listen to local weather and traffic reports. Pay heed to the weather warnings alerting drivers of unsafe and dangerous driving conditions.

ENDS