

Safe Winter Driving in Vermont



 VERMONT
AGENCY OF TRANSPORTATION

SLOW DOWN, DRIVE SMART

Exercise good driving habits to keep you incident-free.

Speed

Slow down and drive according to the road conditions. Driving too fast is the leading cause of winter crashes.

Distance

Leave more room than usual between vehicles—you'll need the extra time and distance to brake safely. Signal early, merge slowly and carefully.

Brake

Brake early and slowly to prevent skidding. Never slam on the brakes on winter roads.

Control

Do not use cruise control during a storm, don't overestimate the ability of four-wheel or all-wheel drive, and look out for black ice on what appears to be bare pavement.

Focus

Stay off the cell phone and minimize other distractions. You'll need added reaction time to respond to an unforeseen event or situation.

Vision

Look ahead—the actions of other vehicles will alert you to what is happening ahead so that you can react safely and in time.

Tires

Good snow tires are a must. Do not rely on all-season tires, and for goodness sake, do not run summer tires on your car during winter in Vermont.

Know Before You Go

For the latest information on road conditions, weather, construction updates, or travel delays, visit www.newengland511.gov.



Vermont's winter season is legendary, and for alpine and Nordic skiers, snowboarders, and snowmobilers, snow and cold temperatures are celebrated with fanfare. Not all winter drivers share that enthusiasm, yet keeping Vermont's 2,700 miles of roads safe and passable for all is a priority of the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTRANS).

SAFE ROADS AT SAFE SPEEDS

During the winter months, Vermont's Snow and Ice Control (SIC) Plan calls for "safe roads at safe speeds", and not "bare roads." That means that during a storm, roads are plowed, sanded and salted to keep them open for traffic and provide a safe surface on which to travel, though road surfaces may be snow covered at times during the storm. Roads will be returned to bare pavement only when the storm is over.

As most travel occurs daily between the hours of 4 a.m. until 10 p.m., a majority of Vermont's resources are deployed during that time frame. Motorists should anticipate reduced coverage and varying road conditions at night and drive accordingly.

KEEPING VERMONT'S ROADS SAFE

Snow and Ice Control

VTRANS uses a time tested approach to maintaining Vermont's roads in winter, which includes using carefully calibrated equipment to spread a measured amount of salt early in a storm, and as necessary throughout, to prevent the snow and ice from bonding to the road. The end result is our ability to achieve bare pavement much sooner after a storm has ended.

Anti-Icing

Just prior to a storm, VTRANS equipment may be seen spraying a liquid onto the road surface. This practice is known as "anti-icing" with salt brine. Salt brine is a 23% mixture of salt and water that will dry within about 45 minutes, leaving a thin, white film of salt that is ready to start working when the first snowflakes fall.

Pre-wetting

Pre-wetting refers to the application of liquids onto salt as it is applied to the road surface. Liquids can include salt brine, calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, or a blend. The benefits of pre-wetting include:

- Keep solid materials on the pavement
- Increase salt activation efficiency
- Melt snow and ice at lower working temperatures
- Melt snow and ice with less salt

The Scoop About Sand

VTrans is often asked about our usage of fashioned sand. Sand is an important tool in snow control, but it has many hidden costs. Though it is at the pit, sand must be screened, hauled, mixed to prevent freezing, stored, used in large quantities then cleaned up in the spring. Other disadvantages include:

- Has no ice melting capability
- Requires constant re-application
- Can cause skidding on dry pavement
- Causes paint chipping and broken windshields
- Creates drainage problems, smothers vegetation and causes siltation of waterways

The Most Important Tool: The Snowplow

Sand, salt and other materials are important snowplow is 'king of the road' when it comes to our highways safe. In fact, when a storm's temperatures are cold (below 15 degrees F), often the best strategy is just plowing. In those cold conditions snow is pushed and will either blow clear of the road or push it aside. Standing at the ready to battle weather are 275 dump trucks with plows and graders, 68 loaders and 68 graders.

Vermont's snow-fighting equipment and maintenance is complemented by a team of 350 skilled, dedicated snowplow operators. Not only do the men and women stay current on the latest technology but they invest long hours behind the wheel applying their expertise day and night—weekends and holidays—to deliver safe roads.





Don't Crowd The Plow

To support the work of our skilled operators, do not travel beside a snowplow for long periods. The impact of plowing snow drifts or packed snow can jostle the plow sideways without warning. Snowplows can create a snow cloud that reduces visibility to zero, so avoid driving into a snow cloud. Do not pass a snowplow when visibility is severely reduced. When you do pass, be sure you can see clearly ahead and allow plenty of room. Be aware that a snowplow driver's vision is restricted; you may see the driver but the driver may not necessarily see you.

