



# Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Rural Transit Providers

## Ready for Winter Driving?

by Justin Dorsey

*As old man winter approaches, icy and snow-packed roads are around the corner. Are you ready to drive on them? If not, this article's discussion of winter driving techniques and safety precautions can help.*

While lying in bed, before drifting off to sleep, you flip on the news for tomorrow's weather. The weatherman says the year's first snowfall, likely between 3 and 5 inches, will happen overnight. Instinctively, you know to set your morning alarm a little earlier. However, the Kansas Highway Patrol knows something else. They know many accidents are likely to happen. According to Lieutenant John Eichkorn of the Kansas Highway Patrol, "Most people's winter driving skills are rusty from driving in warmer conditions so the first snowfall is often the worst."

Once at work, you will remove snow from your vehicle's windshields and lights as part of your pre-trip inspection, buckle up, and leave for your first stop of the day. But will you remember to slow down? You should. Driving too fast for conditions was cited by Lieutenant Eichkorn as the leading cause of accidents in winter driving conditions. He suggests increasing following distance, remembering that acceleration and braking times increase on winter road conditions, and knowing whether your vehicle has anti-lock brakes. Knowing whether your vehicle has anti-lock brakes determines the correct braking technique. If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes, firmly

press the brake pedal until your vehicle stops. However, if your vehicle does not have anti-lock brakes, firmly press the brake pedal until the point of wheel lock-up, then release. Quickly repeat this process until your vehicle stops.

Does this thought sound familiar?: "My vehicle is four-wheel drive so I have nothing to worry about from snow-packed roads." If so, think again. According to Lieutenant Eichkorn, "Drivers of four-wheel drive vehicles have a false sense of security on winter road conditions. Therefore, they may become complacent." Remember, although four-wheel drive gives a vehicle additional maneuverability on winter roads; four-wheel drive will not



No one wants to be stranded, especially in a snow storm, but it happens, so being prepared is important. For example, Reno County Area Transit puts kitty litter in their paratransit vehicles to spread on the

This winter, if your bus begins to lose power or is difficult to start don't assume an engine problem. It might be something else. It might be caused by your diesel fuel. Diesel fuel, in cold conditions, can turn into a gel type substance which can cause a vehicle to lose power, start, but only have enough power to idle, or not start at all. The problem occurs when molecules in the diesel fuel combine to become more solid, thus restricting fuel from passing through the fuel filter. As a result, the engine is starved of fuel. If this occurs, add a diesel fuel additive to lower the fuel's "gelling temperature," or install a diesel fuel heater, or both.

stop a vehicle quicker than if it had two-wheel drive. Bottom line, no matter what the vehicle, winter driving is dangerous, even for large vehicles, like buses.

road for additional tire traction. They also provide their paratransit drivers with rubber shoe covers with spikes on the bottom. The shoe covers are placed

over the driver's shoes and provide additional traction for walking on wintry surfaces. Finally, for extra precaution, a vehicle emergency kit can be placed in a vehicle. The emergency kit should include at the minimum: a blanket, book, booster cables, candle, clothing, flashlight, first aid kit, gloves, hat, kitty litter, non-perishable food, shovel, and a send-help flag to alert passing vehicles of the emergency situation.

We hope this article has refreshed you on winter driving techniques and safety precautions. For additional winter driving instruction and information please check out the source below and those mentioned throughout the article.

### Sources

"Winter Survival Kit," *Grassroutes*, Volume 15, Number 3: 2002.

Other sources include videotapes and Web sites listed in this article.

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## Winter driving videotapes available from Kansas RTAP:

**Winter Driving Safety** (re: buses), 13 minutes. Discusses driving techniques and safety hazards. Produced by MetroLink, 2000.

**Driving Snow: The Keys to Winter Driving** (re: automobiles), 15 minutes. Discusses braking techniques, skid techniques, front wheel and four wheel drive differences, and the importance of proper tires. Produced by Savafilm, 1993.

**Ready, Set, Winter: Driving Safety on Ice and Snow** (re: automobiles), 13 minutes. Discusses pre-winter maintenance, braking techniques, skid techniques, and what to do if you become stuck in the snow. Produced by AAA, 1996.

**Safe Winter Driving Considerations** (re: automobiles), 13 minutes. Discusses pre-winter maintenance, braking techniques, front wheel and four wheel drive differences, handling hills, and passing. Produced by the National Safety Council, 2001.

**Why Skid?: Winter Driving Techniques** (re: automobiles), 18 minutes. Discusses wheel grip, weight transfer, steering, and braking techniques. Produced by Bridgestone Tire, 1994.

To request a video, go to <http://www.ksrtap.org>, click on the Lending Library link, then type the video title in the "Resource Name" box and click Search. Then continue with the request process. Or contact Lisa Harris at the Kansas University Transportation Center at (785) 864-5658.

## Winter driving Web sites

<http://www.kansashighwaypatrol.org/> then click media  
Kansas State Highway Patrol brochure on winter driving.

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/winterdrive/winterdrive.htm>  
Information on winter driving techniques and emergency kit preparation from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation

<http://www.cartalk.com/content/features/WinterDriving/>  
Information on pre-winter vehicle maintenance and winter driving techniques from "Car Talk" on National Public Radio.