

Winter Driving Concerns

A professional truck driver is expected to be aware of the unique challenges and potential hazards associated with winter driving. However, studies have shown many professional drivers will find themselves involved in an accident that could have been prevented. The following are common winter driving errors that often lead to accidents:

- **Excessive speed for conditions.** Excessive speeds can cause you to lose control of a driving situation and lose traction.
- **Not enough following distance.** When roads are snow packed, ice covered or wet, you must increase your following distance. It will take you much longer to stop in inclement weather. Following distance on dry roads in August is much different than the following distance needed in February on snow or ice-covered roads.
- **Failing to react to trouble ahead.** Drivers often underestimate the time and distance needed to stop. Prepare to stop as soon as you note the potential for trouble ahead.
- **Failure to adjust to changing weather conditions.** Severe winter weather conditions can reduce both vehicle traction and driver visibility. As the driver you must be constantly looking for changing road and weather conditions and adjust your driving accordingly.
- **Driving fatigue.** Driving fatigue can only increase in severe weather conditions. As a professional driver you must know your limits and recognize when enough is enough. Pull over and stop to rest.
- **Overconfidence.** This driving error leads to improper following distance, driving fatigue and excessive speeds. In severe winter driving conditions, your driving ability simply cannot overcome the snow packed roads, reduced visibility, and the effects cold weather has on your tires and brakes.
- **Continuing to drive when it's not safe.** No one wants to be late with a load, but it will be even later if you have to be pulled out of the median or a ditch. The best predictor of a driving situation is the driver. If conditions deteriorate to the point where it is unsafe to drive, find a safe place to pull over and wait for conditions to improve.
- **Failing to adequately clean off windows, head and taillights.** Failure to brush snow and/or ice off windows and lights will only reduce the driver's visibility. In addition, it reduces the ability of other drivers to see you. Reduced visibility is one of several known causes of winter accidents. The need to take the time to properly brush off all windows, front and rear lights is essential.

And finally, studies continue to point to a professional driver's attitude as the single most important factor in safe driving, regardless of the driving conditions. A good driver's attitude means avoiding unnecessary risks by putting safety in the forefront and focusing all your attention on driving. Drivers with a good attitude have fewer accidents, regardless of their driving skills, because they do not place themselves in high-risk situations.