

Prepare your vehicle for winter driving

Reliable transportation is especially important in the winter. Not only should you keep your vehicle in top operating condition all year round - for safety and fuel economy - it is especially important to get it winterized to avoid any unpleasant or dangerous situations while traveling in frigid weather.

Check the following:

- Ignition system
- Fuel system
- Belts
- Fluid levels
- Brakes
- Exhaust system
- Wiper blades and windshield washer fluid
- Snow tires
- Tire tread and pressure
- Defroster
- Proper grade oil
- Cooling system
- Battery
- Lights
- Antifreeze

It is always advisable to keep your gasoline tank full. Keeping your tank as full as possible will minimize condensation, providing the maximum advantage in case of trouble.

- A citizens band (CB) radio and/or cellular phone can be very useful to you or another stranded motorist in case of emergency.
- Drive with your headlights on.
- Stock your car with basic winter driving equipment: a scraper and brush, small shovel, jumper cables, tow chain and a bag of sand or cat litter for tire traction.
- Include road flares, a blanket, heavy boots, warm clothing, and flashlight with batteries.

www.kingcounty.gov/roads

Resources

Illegal Dumping Hotline

www.kingcounty.gov/roads
206-296-SITE

King County Flood Warning System

<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wir/flood/flood.htm>
206-296-8200 or 1-800-945-9263

King County Road Alert

www.kingcounty.gov/roads

Contact us

Need something done on your King County road?

www.kingcounty.gov/roads

24/7 Road Helpline

206-296-8100 or 1-800-527-6273

Comments?

If you have comments or questions regarding services provided by our division, please feel free to contact us by e-mail or phone.

10/07RSD

Alternative formats available

206-296-6590 TTY Relay: 711



King County

Department of Transportation
Road Services Division

King Street Center
201 South Jackson Street
KSC-TR-0313
Seattle, WA 98104-3856
206-296-6590
Fax 206-296-0566
E-mail admin.roads@kingcounty.gov
www.kingcounty.gov/roads

Removing snow and ice



King County

Department of Transportation
Road Services Division

www.kingcounty.gov/roads

Keeping it safe on King County roads

With the winter months and colder temperatures comes the potential for icy roads. The King County Road Services Division strives to provide a high level of safety to the traveling public. One tool the division uses to prevent icy conditions is the application of liquid de-icing or “anti-icing” chemicals to lessen pavement freezing. These chemicals lower the freezing point of water, which in turn, lowers the temperature at which ice will form on the pavement. Initial efforts are directed toward hills, curves, and bridges on major arterial and lifeline routes. Despite these efforts, there is no guarantee of ice-free roadways.



Plowing Money Creek Road

Common questions

Here are some of the questions we get asked most often about ice prevention and snow removal:

Q What kind of liquid chemicals does the county use to treat roads? *Answer:* King County typically uses a product called GeoMelt-C consisting of calcium chloride with an organic rust inhibitor. Calcium chloride is the safest and most cost-effective anti-icing product available.

Q Is salt corrosive? Will it damage my vehicle? *Answer:* All chloride products used for anti-icing can be corrosive. Fortunately, western Washington experiences relatively mild and brief winter storm activity, reducing the amount of salt needed over the course of the winter. Most winter storms are also followed by rain. Our wet

Pacific Northwest weather quickly washes salt off the roads thus significantly minimizing vehicle corrosion concerns.

It is worth noting that vehicle manufacturing techniques have evolved in recent years. Many of the newer vehicles have components made of plastic, fiberglass, stainless steel and other materials which are less prone to corrosion than steel. In any case, it is advisable to wash your car periodically throughout the winter to remove any chemical residue.

Q Aren't there other anti-icing products that are less corrosive? *Answer:* Yes, there are products that are known to be less corrosive. However, a Washington State Department of Transportation multi-year study showed that in western Washington's wet climate, there is little to no difference in corrosion caused by salt in comparison to other ice-inhibiting products.

Q Will the anti-icing product you put on the roads hurt the environment? *Answer:* Since the volume of anti-icing products required to manage our Pacific Northwest winters is relatively low, environmental concerns are considered low.



Anti-icing vehicle preparing to lay down de-icing product

The Washington State Transportation Center and Washington State University conducted a thorough scientific study of the effects of chloride anti-icing products on the environment. This study was conducted on a stretch of SR 97 near Leavenworth where high volumes of chloride products were used



Sanding a treacherous curve on Cougar Mountain

near a fish bearing stream. The results indicated that de-icing activities along SR 97 had no measurable negative impact on Peshastin Creek. The full report can be viewed online at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/research/reports/fullreports/500.1.pdf>

Q Why not use good old sand? *Answer:* Sand is still used by King County Road Services Division for improved traction under certain conditions. However, it too has drawbacks:

- Sand gets picked up by tires and blown to the side of the road, instead of staying on the driving area of the roadway. In heavy traffic conditions, it's only effective for the first few vehicles.
- Sand can clog roadway drains and ditches. Sand in streams may have an adverse impact on aquatic life.
- Maintenance costs for sand are higher at the end of the season than for salt or anti-icing chemicals due to the cleanup required.