Being Safe Starts with YOU!
This special edition of “Fleet – Moving You Forward” newsletter focuses on keeping you safe on the roads during the stormy winter season. Whether you are in a King County Fleet vehicle or your own personal vehicle, being safe starts with YOU!

The best way to be safe on the roads during snowy conditions is to stay home and don’t go out! That is not always possible, so if you have to go out, keep in mind the “Three P’s”—Prepare, Protect and Prevent.

PREPARE

• Prep your Vehicle – Check the battery, tire tread, windshield wipers, wiper fluid, and antifreeze. Make sure you have at least a half tank of fuel, full is better, as the weight will give you more traction.

• Have on Hand – Flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter, even floor mats), shovel, snow brush, ice scraper, warning devices (flares), water, food, sensible shoes and blankets. Also, make sure your cell phone is fully charged, but NEVER talk or text while driving.

• Traction Control Devices – Not all vehicles are alike and some are not able to use snow chains or other traction devices. For Fleet vehicles, contact your Fleet Maintenance Shop staff to determine if your vehicle can use the devices. If they can, they will help you order the correct size and type. DO NOT purchase chains at retail stores.

• Plan your Route – Know your route and allow plenty of time, check the weather reports and leave early to avoid rushing. Let others know your route and estimated arrival time. Sign up for FREE King County Road Alert, a service that provides travel alert information about road closures or hazardous conditions on roads in unincorporated King County, managed by King County Road Services Division: http://your.kingcounty.gov/kcdot/roads/roadalert/Subscriptions.aspx.

• Practice Cold Weather Driving—During daylight hours, rehearse maneuvers slowly on ice or snow in an empty lot. Steer into a skid. Know what your brakes will do: Stomp on antilock brakes. Pump on non-antilock brakes.

PROTECT

• Always Buckle Up – It’s the law and a good idea, for you and your passengers.

• Idle Danger – Don’t idle for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space. Even if it is extremely cold, you should leave at least one window partially open to let in fresh air. Lack of ventilation can result in carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of any snow or debris.

• Stop or Stalled – Stay in your vehicle, stay warm and wait for assistance. Most deaths occur when people wander away from their vehicle. Leave the engine and heater on until the vehicle is reasonably warm, then shut it off. When it becomes too cold, or at least ten minutes every hour to charge the battery, turn the engine back on…repeat as long as the fuel holds out.

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Safety First, But Just in Case...

Despite your best efforts and precautionary action, you are in an incident in a King County Fleet managed vehicle. Now what do you do? Fleet Administration, in collaboration with staff from Fleet Maintenance, Risk Management, Department of Transportation Communications Graphic Arts and the county-wide Fleet Managers/Energy Subcommittee team, has revised the Vehicle Incident Reporting packet. The revisions have created a simplified process for all drivers involved in collisions. The new packet contains the Washington State Collision Report, Witness Information cards, Notice to Involved Parties cards and a pen! Instructions and emergency contact numbers are clearly and conveniently printed on the outside of the envelope, located in the glove box. The packet is also available online at http://dot.metrokc.gov/fleet/KCFleet_AccidentInstructions.pdf.

The new packets are being placed in fleet vehicles as they come into the shops for service. Hopefully, you’ll never be in an accident, but the information will be easy to access and understand if you need it.
Avoid Tunnel Vision

Driving on dark, cold winter mornings can provide challenges. Keeping your “clean” headlamps on may allow other drivers to see you, but, can you see them? As driving conditions worsen, avoid limiting your view of the road because of moisture on all the glass surfaces of the car—even ice or snow. Give yourself enough time to clean the glass and hood. A silicone squeegee works great to clear the moisture off, ice requires an ice scraper and snow may require a snow removal tool. Some tools have an ice scraper on one end and whisk broom at the other end. Use of the window defoggers helps loosen up the ice, but it takes a few minutes to be effective.

Never use hot or boiling water to clear a windshield as the windshield could crack or shatter. Fleet technicians maintain good quality washer fluid in the King County Fleet vehicles—one that is good to 10 degrees below zero. They also inspect the wiper blades to make sure they are in good shape. These are also good tips for your personal vehicle. Taking a little extra time and being prepared will help you keep a good eye on the road ahead.

PHOTOS BY BARRY LADENBURG

Remember to clear all windows and mirrors of ice, snow or moisture before driving.

Bring On the Rain

Everyone knows it can be dangerous to drive in snowy/icy conditions, but, King County residents are used to driving in the rain…Or are they?! If you listen to the traffic reports, rainy days can be a nightmare in our region. Here are a few reminders for driving in the rain:

- First and foremost – SLOW DOWN! It takes longer to stop or adjust in wet weather.
- Stay toward the middle lanes as water tends to pool in the outside lanes.
- Increase following distance to more that the “Three Second Rule.”
- Drive in the tracks of a car ahead of you, and avoid lane changes.
- Don’t follow buses or large trucks too closely, as the spray they create can reduce your vision.
- Watch out for brake lights in front of you.
- Avoid using your brakes, instead, take your foot off the accelerator to slow down.
- Turn on your headlights, they help you see the road and other drivers see you.
- Never drive beyond the limits of visibility, especially at night.
- Never drive through moving water if you can’t see the ground through it; your car could be swept off the road.
- When driving through a puddle of uncertain depth, go slow. If it’s deeper than the bottom of your door, turn around and find another route. Deep water can cause serious damage to a modern car’s electrical system.
- Never drive on a road that has been posted CLOSED. The infrastructure of the road could be compromised, resulting in collapsed underpinnings—a potential life threatening situation.

- Do not use cruise control because it can cause your vehicle to hydroplane on wet surfaces.
- If the rain is too heavy for your wipers to handle, it’s time to pull over to a safe, protected area and wait until the storm passes.
- Use caution at intersections because oily deposits build up where cars start and stop. Rain blends with oil and rubber-dust to form a highly dangerous skid mixture. Be extra careful immediately after it starts to rain, especially after a dry spell, because it takes a while for the worst of the dirt and oil to get washed off the road.

If you have an article for the newsletter, please contact Maria Van Horn.

King County DOT / Fleet Division
Editor: Maria Van Horn
206-477-3885
maria.vanhorn@kingcounty.gov
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