WINTER DRIVING SAFETY HANDOUT FOR SUPERVISORS

BENEFITS

When workers drive as part of their duties, it’s critical that you take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety while on the road. Because driving in the winter is particularly hazardous due to weather conditions, these safety measures should address the hazards posed by winter driving. And it’s important that supervisors understand winter driving hazards and the company’s safety measures to protect workers from these hazards.

HOW TO USE THE TOOL

Adapt this handout for your OHS program and the requirements in your jurisdictions’ OHS and motor vehicle laws. Give it to supervisors to ensure that they fulfill their obligations to protect the workers they supervise from hazards while driving for work in the winter.

OTHER RESOURCES:

ShiftIntoWinter.ca

Model Winter Driving Safe Work Procedure

Model Winter Driving Policy

Checklist for Preparing Vehicle for Winter Driving

10 Safe Winter Driving Tips

Spot the Safety Violation: Winter Driving Safety

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WINTER DRIVING SAFETY HANDOUT FOR SUPERVISORS

Winter conditions—such as freezing temperatures, rain, snow, black ice and reduced daylight hours—can present serious hazards for occupational drivers, whether they drive a vehicle full time or as part of their job. As a supervisor (or owner, superintendent, lead hand, foreman, department head, journeymen, trainer etc.), you have a responsibility to ensure the safety of your workers, including those who drive company or personal vehicles for business purposes. The following information will help you and your workers understand and reduce the risks associated with the winter driving season (October 1 to March 31).

Understand Your Legal Responsibilities
• Know your responsibilities under the [insert applicable laws and regulations, such as the OHS Act].
• Instruct drivers and other workers on safe work procedures; verify that tasks are performed safely and provide training when needed.
• Make sure only authorized, competent personnel operate equipment.
• Ensure that young workers and workers new to the company get comprehensive safety training. Because these workers at higher risk for injuries, supervise them closely.
• Ensure that workers and contractors understand their responsibilities under your organization’s safe driving policy and [insert applicable laws and regulations, such as the OHS Act]. If your workers operate vehicles outside of [insert your jurisdiction], make sure that they follow the applicable laws and regulations in those jurisdictions.
• Positively reinforce safe work performance. The following information sets out steps and actions you can take to help meet your legal obligations and improve safety for workers who drive during the winter.

Assess the Risks, Identify Hazards, Develop Strategies
• Perform an annual safety review to identify hazards, such as seasonal weather conditions, vehicle conditions and road hazards. Make use of information sources such as JHSC minutes, maintenance records and anecdotal information from your workers.
• Develop and implement a written strategy and/or an action plan to eliminate or reduce driving risks.
• Use your action plan or business case to get management support for road safety.

Determine When Work Driving Is Necessary
When possible, eliminate the hazards associated with winter driving by first exhausting all other means of conducting business, such as by e-mail, telephone, video conferencing, making use of public transportation etc. By limiting vehicle trips, you’ll keep your workers safe, reduce costs and improve the environment.

When Driving Is Necessary
Safe trips are planned trips. When driving is required:
- Prepare your drivers.
- Prepare company vehicles and personal vehicles driven for work purposes.
- Ensure that your workers drive for the conditions.

Prepare Your Drivers
• Provide your workers with information to help them understand the importance of safe seasonal driving.
• Instruct your workers to check current weather and road conditions before driving.

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• Encourage your workers to revise work travel schedules during hazardous conditions.
• Provide winter driving training to your workers—90% of vehicle crashes are caused by human error.
• Instruct workers to conduct a vehicle pre-trip inspection each time they drive. Monitor pre-trip inspection documentation.
• Direct workers to follow the company’s working alone procedure. Monitor compliance with this regulatory requirement.
• Instruct workers on what to do if they’re stranded. Include specific directions, such as stay with the vehicle for safety and warmth; carry a cell phone to call for roadside assistance or 911 in an emergency, etc.
• Encourage discussion of road safety issues, such as winter driving, at safety meetings. Conduct quick safety tool-box talks at the start of each shift.

Prepare Your Fleet
• Give each vehicle a pre-winter check-up. Make sure tires, battery, brakes, cooling and heating systems, electrical and exhaust systems, and belts and hoses are in good working order. Switch to winter wiper blades.
• Instruct workers to scrape all snow and ice from windows, lights and mirrors, as well as from the hood and roof. In addition, windows should be completely defrosted before driving.
• Instruct workers to check tire pressure regularly. Tire pressure drops in colder conditions.
• Ensure vehicles are equipped with winter tires. They provide better traction in cold weather (7°C or less) and in snow, slush and icy conditions. Install four matched tires that carry the winter tire logo on each vehicle. Encourage and support the installation of winter tires on personal vehicles driven for work.
• If tire chains are to be used, ensure that workers are trained on how to safely install them. In addition, develop procedures on ideal locations where workers can safely chain up (i.e., away from busy roads).
• Instruct workers to keep gas tanks full to avoid condensation, which can cause fuel lines to freeze.
• Provide each vehicle with a winter survival kit that includes an appropriate first aid kit, an approved high visibility vest, additional windshield washer fluid, flares, matches or a lighter, shovel, traction mat, sandbags (for extra weight and traction), flashlight and extra alkaline batteries, battery jumper cables, spare tire, wheel wrench and a jack.

Direct Workers to Drive for the Conditions
• Allow extra time for work travel. Encourage workers to adjust their schedules so they aren’t rushing to get to their destination.
• Instruct workers to slow down when driving. Posted speed limits are for ideal road conditions; drivers must reduce speed depending on the conditions.
• Instruct workers to increase the distance between their vehicle and the vehicle driving in front of them.
• Inform workers to use caution when approaching highway maintenance equipment.
• Instruct your drivers to be aware of challenges, such as limited visibility (especially in adverse weather conditions), pedestrians or cyclists wearing dark clothing. Winter driving can also be a challenge for older drivers as their vision takes longer to adapt to changing light conditions.
• Instruct your workers about the hazards of seasonal rain and fog:
- Light rain mixed with residual oil can make road conditions slick.
- Heavy rain creates conditions ideal for hydroplaning.
- Fog can reduce visibility of the road ahead to as little as the front of the vehicle. Driving in fog should be avoided whenever possible.
• Instruct your workers about the hazards of snow and ice:
  - Hard-packed snow on a road can be as slippery as ice. Snow can also be rutted and full of hard tracks and snow “gullies” that can throw the vehicle off track.
  - Wet snow can make for slushy roads. Heavy slush can build up in the wheel wells of vehicles and can affect steering.
  - Slush and spray from other vehicles can cause sudden loss of visibility.
  - Ice forms on roads in shaded areas, on bridges and overpasses—these sections of road often freeze much sooner and stay frozen long after the sun has risen.
  - Sections of the road that appear black and shiny have frosted over and can cause a vehicle to suddenly lose traction.

**Administration**

• Keep records of your safety activities. (Documentation is an essential element of any effective road safety or OHS program.)
• Conduct seasonal maintenance reviews and vehicle checks in the fall and spring. Include personal vehicles used for work-related driving. Review vehicle maintenance procedures and information at health and safety meetings.
• Communicate disciplinary measures for not complying with the organization’s driving policy.

**Leadership Is Key**

• Show your commitment to occupational road safety and workplace safety; your support helps to set the tone for positive work practices being adopted by your workers.
• Support your workers—assist them in making safe decisions about when not to travel during winter.
• Reward or acknowledge safe actions taken by your workers.
• Encourage input on driving safety from your workers. Discuss “near miss” motor vehicle incidents and other driving hazards.
• Lead by example—drive safely, at work and at leisure. Support and follow the rules set out in the company’s safety program.