



Winter Travel Emergency Kit

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8 December 2005

With today's four-wheel drive vehicles and cell phone technology travel may seem safe. But you can easily find yourself and your family in dangerous situations during the winter. Say that on a trip across the state a blinding snowstorm makes the roads impassible, so you decide to pull over and wait out the storm. Or that your vehicle goes off the road while returning from a hunting trip (as happened to a family in Worland last week – they spent two days in their pick up before being found). Assembling a kit of some basic items may help you survive hazardous winter travel.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has made recommendations on things to include in a winter travel kit. The kit should contain:

- Blanket/sleeping bag
- Shovel
- Windshield scraper
- Battery-powered radio
- Flashlight (and extra batteries)
- Water
- Snack food (candy bars, raisins, dried fruit, granola bars)
- Extra warm clothes, such as insulated coveralls, jacket, hat, gloves, socks and boots.
- Tow chain or rope
- Tire chains
- Bag of road salt or sand or non-skid mats (for traction, if stuck)
- Fluorescent distress flag (a bright bandanna tied to an antenna will work)
- Jumper/booster cables
- Road maps
- Emergency flares or reflectors
- Cellular telephone or two-way radio, if available
- First aid kit.
- Two or more day supply of medications.
- Candle, coffee can and matches (stored in water-proof container).

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, about 70 percent of automobile accidents resulting in death are ice-or-snow related. Another 25 percent of winter deaths can be attributed to people being caught out in a storm.

The National Weather Service reports that many people die each year when they attempt to leave their vehicle during a storm to walk to safety. Instead, stranded drivers should stay with the car, tie a piece of cloth to the car's antenna, and keep the car running while using the heater 10 minutes out of each hour. People should remember to keep their interior lights on while the engine is running, and to avoid hypothermia by constantly moving their arms and legs.

FEMA has collected other information winter driving, available at <http://www.fema.gov/hazards/winterstorms/winterf.shtm>