Extreme Winter Weather Calls For Driver Preparation, Says AAA

Snow, extreme cold and blizzard-like weather expected throughout this week will create extremely dangerous driving conditions for motorists on most highways statewide. AAA Michigan advises motorists to prepare themselves and their car.

Motorists are advised to monitor weather conditions and follow advice from authorities. If it is not safe to travel and you don't have to travel, don't drive.

During this severe winter weather AAA expects a the high number of emergency road service calls throughout the week. AAA Michigan also advises motorists that priority service will be given to members who are stranded or in a dangerous situation.

AAA recommends if motorists become stranded, it is best to stay with the vehicle. If you can start your engine, run it only long enough to keep warm. Make sure the exhaust pipe is snow-free. Keep emergency supplies in the car, such as a cell phone, boots, gloves, blanket, a "coffee can heater," flashlight and reflective triangle.

Defensive Driving

When taking to the road during winter weather, remember to drive with caution to help maintain your safety as well as that of passengers, fellow motorists and roadside workers. AAA recommends the following tips for winter driving:

- Before starting out in snowy weather, take time to remove the snow from the entire car so it doesn't blow onto your windshield or the windshields of other drivers. Make sure your mirrors and lights are clean as well.

- Drive with your low-beam headlights illuminated.

- When the roads are icy, slow down and allow extra time to reach your destination. Even better, delay your trip, stop early for the day, or take an extended break from driving. Using an online service such as the TripTik® Travel Planner at AAA.com can help you find restaurants and lodgings.

- Allow sufficient room for maintenance vehicles and plows, stay at least 15 car lengths (200 feet) back and, if you need to pass, go to the other vehicle's left.

- Watch for icy surfaces on bridges and intersections, even when the rest of the road seems to be in good condition.

- If you get stuck in snow, straighten the wheel and accelerate slowly. Add sand or salt under the drive wheels to help avoid spinning the tires.

- If your tires lose traction, continue to look and steer in the direction you want to go. If the drive wheels start to spin or slide while going up a hill, ease off the accelerator slightly and then gently resume speed.

- Look farther ahead in traffic. Actions by other drivers will alert you to problems and give you extra seconds to react.

- When changing lanes, avoid cutting in front of trucks, which need more time and distance than passenger vehicles to stop.
- Don't use cruise control in precipitation and freezing temperatures.
- Remember that four-wheel drive helps you to get going quicker, but it won't help you stop any faster.
- Apply constant, firm pressure to the pedal with anti-lock brakes.

Proper Preparation

Preparing now for frigid weather conditions will help keep your vehicle on the road, advises AAA Michigan. Motorists can help keep their vehicles on the road by doing the following:

- Check your battery strength. Faulty batteries cause more car starting problems than any other factor. At 0 degrees, a good battery has 35 percent less starting power.
- Park your car in the garage. If you have no garage, put a tarp over the hood or park protected from prevailing winds. To keep doors from freezing shut, place a plastic trash bag between the door and the frame.
- Keep the fuel tank at least half-full to avoid fuel-line freeze-up.