Your Guide to
Winter Driving

What should I have in the car?
What kind of tires do I need?
When can I expect avalanche control operations, and why?
How do I get through winter with my car and my driving record intact?

For more winter driving information, visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter

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Reasons for Mountain Pass Closures and Delay

It takes only one unprepared driver to stop or slow traffic. Be prepared for winter travel, be extra cautious and slow down.

Collision Clean Up: Drivers who go too fast for conditions, or are not prepared for winter travel end up in the ditch, or blocking other drivers. One of the most common reasons we close the pass is to get these spun-out or blocking cars off the road so others can safely travel over the mountains.

Avalanche Control: When possible, we do avalanche control work when traffic volumes are low. If there are heavy snowfalls or extreme temperature changes, we may have to do emergency avalanche control work. We attempt to provide advance notice, but in an emergency, this may not be possible.

Road Clearing: If we have heavy snow in a short amount of time, we may close the pass to clear ice and snow from travel lanes.

Traction Tires Advised - Oversize loads prohibited.
Oversize vehicles are restricted from roadways during severe weather conditions.

Traction Tires Required - Passenger vehicles must have approved traction tires. Chains are required on all vehicles over 10,000 gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), including large passenger trucks and SUVs over 10,000 GVWR.

Tire Chains Required (except four- and all-wheel drive) - In extreme weather conditions, the advisory may indicate chains are required on four- and all-wheel drive vehicles.

On the Road

Do not be the driver who shuts down the pass! Drive for conditions - slower speeds, slower acceleration, slower steering, and slower braking in winter conditions.

Use your headlights at all times.

Remember, four- and all-wheel drive vehicles will not stop or steer better in icy conditions.

Don’t use cruise control or overdrive on slick or snow-covered surfaces.

Leave extra room between your vehicle and the vehicles in front of you. Look farther ahead in traffic. And remember, big trucks take longer to stop.

Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges, or shady spots.

If you find yourself behind a snowplow, stay behind it until it is safe to pass. Remember that a snowplow driver’s field of vision is very limited, so he or she may not see you. Snow removal equipment travels slowly and may make sudden movements right or left. Stay well back (15 car lengths) until you’re sure it is safe to pass or until the plow pulls off the road.

Slow down and be extra cautious near the chain-up and removal areas. There are often people out of their vehicles moving around.

Check Your Route

On Your Mobile Device: www.wsdot.wa.gov/small/

On the Radio: Call 5-1-1 for travel info and mountain pass conditions.

On the Phone: Program your radio to WSDOT’s Highway Advisory Radio frequencies before you leave: 530 AM and 1610 AM.

Winter Information: www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter

WSDOT Newsroom: www.wsdot.wa.gov/news/
In the newsroom, you can sign up for e-mail or text news alerts and the WSDOT Twitter account.

Highway Cameras: www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/

Traffic Alerts and Slowdowns: www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/trafficalerts

Mountain Pass Reports: www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes

Weather: www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/weather

Road Temperatures: www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/roadtemps/

Commercial Vehicle Services: www.wsdot.wa.gov/commercialvehicle/

Washington State Patrol: www.wsp.wa.gov

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Check Your Route

Cut on the dotted line and take this half on the road.

Cut on the dotted line and keep this half at home.