



## INDEPENDENT CARRIER SAFETY ASSOCIATION

# Winter Driving FAQs

### Weather-related Accident FAQs

- **What are the most common types of winter accidents for professional drivers?**  
Going back to data from 10/1/2017, the most common on-road winter accidents are run off the road and jackknife accidents.
- **What are some casual factors of run off the road and jackknife accidents?**  
Speeds too fast for conditions, slippery roads, hydroplaning, braking and swerving at the same time, trying to accelerate too quickly, and following too closely, combined with an evasive maneuver.
- **At what speed are jackknifing accidents more likely to occur?**  
Jackknife accidents can occur at any speed; however, most jackknife accidents happen at speeds over 45 mph. A driver must adjust his or her speed based on all conditions (road, load, weather, and fatigue) while avoiding hard braking and swerving.
- **What are the most common casual factors of winter accidents for professional drivers?**  
The most common causal factors of on-road winter accidents are “speed too fast for conditions” and the driver’s failure to recognize risk. Drivers need to be able to recognize when snow, ice and wind will impact their ability to safely operate the equipment and then make proper adjustments.
- **How can drivers prevent accidents caused by these two factors?**  
SLOW DOWN! Maintain a SAFE SPEED for conditions. A good rule is to reduce speed by half of the posted speed limit on snow, even more if roads are icy. Increase FOLLOWING DISTANCE to 12-15 seconds in adverse weather. DO NOT use cruise control or engine brakes in adverse weather. AVOID traveling as part of a “pack” of trucks.
- **At what wind speed can trailers blow over?**  
Severe storms can bring high winds, but crosswinds as low as 40 mph can push an empty tractor-trailer on its side. Try to park headed into the wind if possible.
- **In which states do most Commercial Vehicle winter accidents happen?**  
The states with the most winter weather accidents since 10/1/2017 are Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Oregon, and Missouri. On-road preventable accidents have occurred most frequently in Ohio and Indiana.

- **Which professional drivers are most likely to have a winter weather accident?**  
Professional drivers with between 18 months and 3 years of experience are most “at risk” for a winter weather accident. Inexperience, complacency, overconfidence, and inattention are the most common cause factors.
- **At what time of day do most winter weather accidents happen?**  
Between the hours of 8am and Noon. This is the time when roads are in “transition” and snow & Ice begin to melt.

## Equipment FAQs

- **What do you need to know about diesel fuel and anti-gels?**
  - Diesel fuel can gel in cold temperatures because it contains paraffin wax which is used to improve fuel viscosity and lubrication. At 32°F, the wax will crystallize and leave the fuel tank clouded. At about 10°F, it will start to gel and clog the tank and fuel filters.
  - Although anti-gelling additives will not hurt diesel fuel or the engine, kerosene works just as well and is usually more cost-effective. Adding one gallon to each tank will keep fuel from jelling and is more economical than additives. (Operators should consider buying in bulk, keeping a 55-gallon drum at home or the terminal and carrying a couple of gallons onboard for every trip). Colder weather states will have anti-gel additives added to their bulk tank to prevent gelling. States that are not in the colder climates do not have as much gelling protection. Try not to fuel south of Tennessee when headed north.
  - Fuel tank level is also a concern/ Make sure to run off the top half of your tank. Tanks with more fuel have less chance of forming condensation and turning into ice or fuel gelling. This goes for the DEF tank as well. Make sure that fuel tanks remain topped off, especially before driving through remote areas or on secondary highways.
- **At what temperature should drivers idle the truck to avoid fuel gelling?**  
This is called the “10 & 2 Rule”: If is 10°F or less and the truck will be sitting for more than two hours, IDLE THE TRUCK. This will HELP to prevent fuel gelling, icing, thickening of motor oil, and freezing of batteries. Remember that fuel lines will gel before the tanks so keep the engine running and the fuel moving.
- **What do you need to know about bunk heaters?**  
Before heading into cold weather, check the bunk heater. Every bunk heater should be turned on, for about 15 minutes, to make sure it is functioning properly. The heater will keep the bunk area warm without idling. It has its own fan so there is no need to run the engine.

## Driver Preparedness FAQs

- **What constitutes proper winter weather clothing?**  
Proper clothing includes a pair of winter boots with good tread/traction that will keep feet warm and dry. Be sure to include multiple pairs of warm socks, loose layers of clothing, hoodies, hat/beanie, extra gloves, rain/snow gear or a coat to support the temperature for either day or night.

- **What items are in a 'winter weather survival kit'?**

Have extra blankets or a sleeping bag, non-perishable food (canned or dried goods), extra medications, a gallon water jug or bottled water, cell phone charger, and strap-on boot traction equipment. Also have a flashlight, extra washer fluid, windshield scraper, jumper cables, extra fuses, first aid kit. Drivers need to be prepared in case of a road closure or emergency breakdown situation. We do not want anybody to put themselves in danger due to unforeseen weather.
- **What about chains?**

Make sure to have snow chains onboard and check to see that they are in good condition. Practice installing them so it is a quick and easy operation when they are needed. Chains give added traction; professional drivers will add chains as they are needed before they are required. Remember, the time to chain up is right after asking "Should I chain up?"
- **How can drivers prevent slip and fall injuries?**
  - Wear good traction boots every time leaving the truck. Ice hides in plain sight. There are many new anti-slip tools for shoes these days. They can help drivers avoid a painful fall.
  - Use three-points of contact when entering or exiting the truck or a trailer. To do this, one must have contact with the equipment with one hand and two feet or two hands and one foot. Always face the cab or the nose of the trailer, take time to get a good grip. Hands must be free to maintain proper three-point contact.