

Weekly Safety Tip – 11/23/09 – On the Road

38.4 million people are expected to travel 50 miles or more during the Thanksgiving holiday. While the number of expected travelers is up, the number of those flying is down, according to the American Automobile Association (AAA) (see the full article in the Washington Post linked here - <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/18/AR2009111801406.html?nav=emailpage>). That means a lot of traffic on the highways during the next week.

Whether you are driving to grandma's house for the big holiday meal, or just trying to get to work safely, there's no way to avoid the traffic. And it's Winter, which can make it worse. To help you, here are some tips for Winter driving from the AAA.

1. Prepare your vehicle for the drive. Have your car serviced, fill it up with gas, check the windshield wipers, make sure your tires are in good shape and check the level of your antifreeze.
2. Prepare an emergency kit. Blankets, flashlights and batteries, first aid kit, a few basic tools, and drinking water are recommended. Charge your cell phone, and take a spare key for your vehicle. Unless you know there's no chance of snow or you have snow tires, carry chains.
3. Prepare yourself for the drive. Rest up before you start. Plan well enough in advance that you are relaxed. Take some games or music for the kids. If you can be flexible, avoid driving on the Wednesday afternoon before Thanksgiving, and the Sunday after, when traffic will be especially heavy.
4. Prepare to arrive safely. Have a map or gps system. Let someone know your route and when to expect you.
5. Prepare for the weather.
 - If the roads are wet or slick, it will take 3 times as long to stop, so slow it down and increase the distance between you and the car ahead of you.
 - If there is standing water on the road, be aware of the possibility of hydroplaning. Slow down, avoid sharp turns or abrupt braking, and when possible, drive in the tracks of the car in front of you.
 - Be alert for areas of special hazards, like overpasses or shady spots where ice might form.
 - At speeds above 25 mph, it is safer to steer clear of hazards like stopped vehicles, than it is to brake.
 - In the fog, drive slowly with your lights on low beam, avoid lane changes if possible, and use your ears – listen for traffic and hazards that you might not be able to see.

There are more safe driving tips at AAA.com, linked here:

http://www.aaa.com/aaa/sem/sem.htm?redirectto=http://www.aaa.com/?area=JoinSEM&skin=JoinSEM&gcid=S15141x073&keyword=exact_aaa.

To all our friends, have a safe and healthy Thanksgiving.