

Safe Winter Driving

Safe winter driving starts with your vehicle. Check the battery and tire treads before any snow or ice is expected, and replace any worn tires. Fill windshield-washer reservoirs with no-freeze fluid and keep your windows clear. Don't forget to check your antifreeze. Allow plenty of time and be familiar with your routes when traveling. Know what your brakes will do and how your car will react in the event of slippery conditions.

The *New York State Department of Motor Vehicles Driver's Manual* provides the following information on skidding:

- If your rear wheels start to skid, turn the steering wheel in the direction you want the front wheels to go.
- If your rear wheels are sliding left, steer left. If they're sliding right, steer right. If your rear wheels start sliding the other way as you recover, ease the steering wheel toward that side. You might have to steer left and right a few times to get your vehicle completely under control.
- If your front wheels skid, take your foot off the gas and shift to neutral, but don't try to steer immediately. As the wheels skid sideways, they will slow the vehicle and traction will return; then steer in the direction you want to go.
- If your vehicle has an anti-lock braking system (ABS), keep your foot with even pressure on the brake pedal. If your vehicle does not have ABS, pump the pedal gently, pumping more rapidly only as your car slows down. Braking hard with non-antilock brakes will make the skid worse.

Note that four-wheel-drive vehicles only provide better driving traction, not improved stopping. Practice cold weather driving during daylight hours at a local parking lot.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.