

## Foul Weather Driving

Bad weather affects all roads. Our interstate system is a marvelous example of modern engineering, but no matter how good the road is; it is dangerous when there is sleet, snow, or ice on the roadway. Speeds must be reduced on slippery roads. When road conditions are slippery, drivers must look farther ahead so they can anticipate emergencies and avoid the need for sudden maneuvers. Last-second stops and turns because the most skids on slippery pavements. Extra care must be taken on hills. Brake over the top of blind hills at a speed that will permit you to bring your vehicle to a stop in case the highway isn't clear ahead. On a downgrade, both loss of traction and gravity are working against you. Don't attempt to drive around or through a scene where other vehicles have obviously had trouble with the road conditions. The same conditions that caused their trouble may still be there when you arrive. When there is no room to get through, you must be prepared to stop. During the winter months, snow- and ice-covered parking lots are prevalent. Good drivers will allow more clearance between their vehicles and fixed objects when maneuvering on bad surfaces. A pile of snow or an ice rut may throw vehicles off just enough to cause them to strike a stationary object if not enough clearance has been allowed. Drivers of vehicles with air brakes must take care to protect their air supply in freezing weather. Brakeline freeze can be annoying and dangerous. Many newer trucks are equipped with synthetic airlines, so the old solution of melting the ice with a fuse or torch is no longer a quick solution. If the vehicle is not equipped with an air dryer or other means of automatically expelling water and other contaminants from air tanks, the driver must take the time to manually drain the air tanks every day. The lighting systems of vehicles become especially important during the winter months. Nights are longer, and visibility is often reduced by bad weather. Electrical systems are winter-sensitive. Approximately 80 percent of all light bulb failure are due to environmental reasons. Drivers must inspect their lights more often during the winter and clean them when necessary so they can see and be seen by other highway users. Foul weather driving is much more strenuous. Drivers need proper rest before every trip, and while enroute, fresh air helps keep drivers alert. An open window is an old safety practice, and it helps drivers hear what is going on around their vehicles. After all precautions are taken and good practices are followed, there still will be occasions when conditions become too hazardous to proceed. Good drivers will pull off the road at the first safe place, and wait until conditions improve before continuing. The Daily Safety Focus – A Serie

## Learn from Near Accidents

When you notice a red light glowing on the dashboard of your car, you recognize it as a warning, to let you know that there's a problem. A near accident is a warning too: For example, when you're driving down the highway at a good clip and another car pulls out in front of you, it's necessary to hit the brakes or execute a quick maneuver to avoid an accident. Chances are that you'll be pretty hot under the collar at the other driver's action, but if you're smart, you won't let anger overpower your safe driving habits. You'll also make a mental note to be more alert and watch for cars approaching the highway from side roads. This could save your life next time. A near accident in the workplace is a warning or an indication that something is wrong. Perhaps a machine isn't operating correctly, or materials aren't stacked properly, or someone has acted in an unsafe way. Close calls or near accidents on the job should also be converted into safety precautions. Let's consider some typical accidents that could have been avoided if the closecall warning had been heeded. • An employee tripped over a discarded piece of two-by-four and fractured an ankle. • A worker slipped on some trash laying on the ground and grabbed a cabinet in an attempt to break the fall, pulling the cabinet over on top of her. \*Suggestion: Using real examples from your own operation can have great impact. It's fairly certain that the proper handling of earlier near accidents could have prevented the real thing from happening in these cases. The two-by-four, loose tile and trash on the floor had probably caused other employees to step aside to avoid tripping or may even have caused stumbles that didn't result in injury. Chances are, there were several, yet in these cases and doubtless in many others no one heeded the warnings. Nothing was done to correct the situations, and accidents resulted. We can't go through life depending on luck to keep us healthy. We have to make our own luck, as the saying goes—by acting in a safe manner and taking proper precautions

## Almost an Accident—Be Warned

How many times have you come close to having an accident, shrugged it off as a near miss, and gone on your merry way without giving it another thought? I want all of you to give it thought. Many times, the difference between a near miss and an accident is just a fraction of a second in timing or a fraction of an inch in distance. Next time, the difference may not be there. Near misses are warnings of accidents in the making. If we accept the warnings and look for the causes, we may be able to prevent similar situations from developing. Let's say you're going up a gangplank onto a bridge footer. Your foot slips, but you're young, agile, fast, and empty-handed. So you regain your balance with no harm done. The reactions of the next person to come along are a little slower than you were. Then comes the third worker—just as fast as the first two but unable to maneuver because he's carrying a heavy load. He slips and falls off the plank with the load on top of him. How seriously he's injured is a matter of luck—perhaps only scratches, but maybe a broken ankle or rib or neck! Now the loose cleat, sand, mud, or ice is discovered, and the condition is corrected. But it's like locking the garage after the motorcycle is stolen. Two people saw the thief but didn't recognize what was happening, so didn't report anything. There are a few accidents that occur without some advance warning—and that is what a near miss is. If we heed that warning and check into the hazard, most accidents can be eliminated. So, I want all of you to keep your eyes open for those advance warnings. Don't shrug off the near misses as only close calls; find out why they happened and what corrective action is needed. Don't take unnecessary chances or ignore warnings, and don't think, "it can't happen to me." It can happen to you if you don't take precautions to protect yourself.

