

## Article for December 10, 2014

Over the river and through the woods, to Grandmother's house we go... With the holidays all around us, you may be planning to travel a bit this month! You may be traveling a few miles or across a few states, but safe driving habits could be a life saver for you and your loved ones!

Many weather conditions can make driving a bit challenging, especially when they are weather conditions that we here in Madison County might not be used to facing very often. Wet, snow-covered or icy conditions can really challenge our driving skills! Road conditions you might encounter during winter weather might include loss of pavement friction, restricted visibility due to fog, falling rain, or vehicle spray, lane obstruction due to standing water or plowed or blowing snow, or even infrastructure damage, such as a washed-out road. These can be particularly difficult when we are driving on unfamiliar roads.

So, if you find yourself driving in winter weather locally or further away, know how to stay safer! One of the simplest things you can do is to reduce your speed. Remember that speed limits are based on normal road and weather conditions. Expand the distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you, especially if you are driving on snow or ice. Give a little extra consideration for other vehicles that might be towing a trailer or carrying a heavy load, too. Slamming on your brakes in front of them can be a recipe for disaster. Consider the distance that they may need to stop, especially in adverse weather. If you are towing or carrying a heavy load, keep a larger distance between you and the vehicle in front of you if you can.

Use extra caution on bridges, ramps, overpasses, and shaded areas. These areas tend to freeze first and are often slippery. If you begin to slide, ease off the gas pedal or brakes; steer into the direction of the skid until you feel you have regained traction. Then, straighten your vehicle.

Although we don't often – if ever – see a snow plow around here, you may come across one in your travels. Be on the lookout for snow removal equipment and stay at least 200 feet back if you are behind a snow plow.

Always, always be considerate of other drivers, law enforcement and maintenance personnel. They, just like you, are hoping for a safe and secure driving experience. Plan your travels with road conditions in mind; allow plenty of time to get where you are going, and Be Safe Out There!