

Drivers need more time to stop in winter weather conditions

From the desk

of Inspector Tim Melanson

Are your tires the right ones for winter driving?

Do you drive where there's a lot of snow? The condition and type of tires you use are important for safety.

If you are like most vehicle owners, you probably have 'all-season' tires on your vehicle. While they are designed to handle most driving conditions, they may not be suitable in heavy snow.

Proper tires do make a difference for your safety.

All-season tires can begin to lose their grip when the temperature drops below 7°C. Winter tires are made for cold and snowy conditions. They remain more flexible than all-season tires in colder temperatures and the deeper tread pattern allows the tire to clear itself of snow as it rotates.

Tips from the experts

Check the condition of your tires and check air pressures regularly. A tire can lose one pound of air pressure for every five-degree drop in temperature.

Avoid mixing tires of different tread patterns, construction and size. Replace any that are damaged or have worn treads.

It's recommended you install four winter tires, even on front-wheel drive vehicles, for best control in slippery and snowy conditions.

Stopping distance

Stopping distance is composed of two parts - perception-response distance and braking distance. A vehicle travelling at a constant speed and approaching a hazard will leave a 2.5 second reaction time. At 88 km/hr, the vehicle will travel about 60.95 meters in 2.5 seconds (roughly 10 car lengths).

During adverse weather conditions, it can be difficult to maintain a high level of alertness for a long period of time and tired drivers can take much longer than 2.5 seconds to react.

The braking distance is where the vehicle actually comes to a stop. The braking distance on an icy road is six times further than on a dry road. Side friction is reduced too, and the chances of losing control are greatly increased (courtesy of Cornell Local Roads Program).

For more information, please refer to the Ministry of Transportation website mto.gov.on.ca