

Caution: Prepare for the Upcoming Winter Season

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As Fall changes to Winter, the van, vanpool group and driver must be prepared and ready to expect the unexpected.

Prepare the van. Service the van for Winter and keep the fuel level up. Tires must be checked more frequently and adjusted to recommended inflations. Replace worn or streaky windshield wipers and test the window defrosters.

Properly equip the van with a map that the 'co-pilot' is familiar with and be prepared to use it when an alternate route is preferable. Take extra windshield washer fluid, an extra scraper and a brush. Have available warm boots, a hat and gloves as well as a flashlight, extra batteries, a shovel and a road hazard kit.

Prepare the vanpool group. Communication is the key. Now is the time to discuss how decisions will be made if road conditions appear to be hazardous and the commute should be cancelled or delayed.

Have a cell phone on-board with both emergency numbers and the numbers each vanpool member. If it is too dangerous to travel, don't put the group at risk because someone is unwilling or unable to be contacted.

Prepare the driver. Drivers should start earlier than normal each day, ensuring they are well rested and alert. Adequate rest and proper nourishment may sound old fashioned, but they are still an important part of preparation.



When driving in poor weather *reduce speed* and *increase following distance*. Use the brake lights to send a signal to drivers behind the van to slow down increase their following distances. The van probably has anti-lock brakes. When it is necessary to stop suddenly, keep the brake firmly depressed. Do not pump anti-lock brakes.

When approaching traffic with glaring headlights, temporarily glance down and to the right, but keep your focus and attention up and ahead of the van. Always be aware of the traffic up ahead and be prepared to react. Glance in the mirrors often to be aware of vehicles behind and beside the van.

Traffic can become a problem in poor weather and other drivers can become impatient and sometimes irate. It is the driver's responsibility to get the van and the group safely to their destination. Stay in control and take the necessary time to be safe. If there is a slippery road where traffic is also an obstacle, try to take an alternate route. If that is not an option, let traffic in front clear and proceed cautiously, always maintaining control of the van.

The driver and the passengers must be buckled in their seatbelts at all times when the van is running. In the event of a crash, if it's safe to do so, stay in the vehicle. Injuries often occur when occupants leave the safety of the van.

Winter driving can be beautiful and enjoyable. At VSPI we hope you will all have safe and uneventful commutes all Winter long.

