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TRI-COUNTY TIMES  
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## Living

### Stay alert, slow down and stay in control - drive safe

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**By Sharon Stone**

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With temperatures in the 30s and meteorologists calling for snow by the end of the week, now would be the right time to review tips for safer driving.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard wants to remind drivers that winter driving can be safe with planning and extra caution. If someone finds it necessary to drive in the snow, the three key elements to safer driving are to stay alert, slow down, and stay in control.

The sheriff said, prior to heading out, vehicle owners will want to make sure he or she completes a maintenance check, by inspecting the battery, belts and hoses, checking the anti-freeze, oil, lights, brakes, heater and defroster. Also, check the exhaust system for leaks, which may allow carbon monoxide to enter the vehicle.

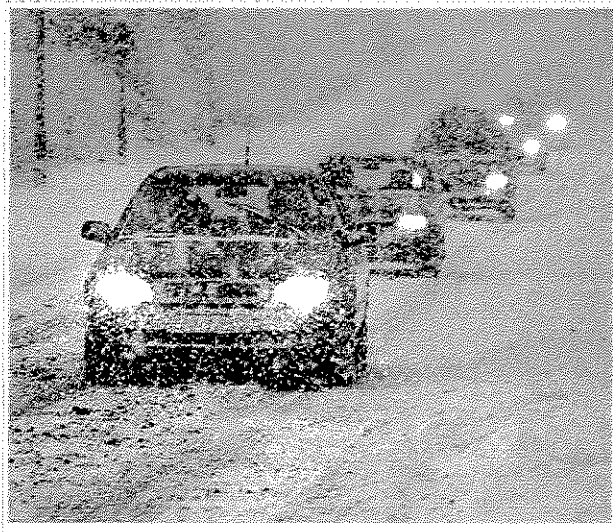
Motorists should plan their route ahead of time, leave extra travel time and make sure someone knows of the plans. Comfortable driving clothing is also advised so that movement will not be restricted. In extremely cold temperatures, it is a good idea to have warm clothing available for when exiting the vehicle.

Motorists should always clear any snow and ice from all windows, lights, mirrors and the roof before driving. After starting the vehicle, wait for the interior windows to clear of fog for optimum visibility.

Since it takes longer to stop on slippery surfaces, add additional time to the three-second rule. Slow driving speeds in snow and icy conditions, make turns slowly and make all starts slow and smooth. While traveling at very low speeds, testing the vehicle brakes, when safe, will let the driver know just how slippery the road surface is.

Bridges and overpasses typically freeze before the regular travel lanes of a roadway. The U.S. 23 overpass over Silver Lake Road in Fenton has been the sight of several spinouts over the years, as both entrances to the highway are uphill, and motorists are accelerating to enter highway traffic. Fenton police officers check for icy conditions on that overpass, and request salt applications when necessary.

#### **Black ice**



Black ice sometimes appears without notice. With black ice, areas of the roadway appear black and shiny and vehicles can suddenly lose traction. Motorists are advised to slow down in these areas and to keep their feet off the brake.

Even after taking all of the necessary precautions, some motorists get their vehicle stuck. When this happens, Bouchard stresses that travelers stay calm and not panic. Motorists should stay with their vehicle for safety and warmth while waiting for help to arrive. If a cell phone is available and there is cell phone service, call for help.

Capt. Chris Swanson of the Genesee County Sheriff's Department said, "Inevitably, the first snowfall reminds drivers just how dangerous the roads can be." He added that historically, U.S. 23, through the Fenton area is a very dangerous strip, due to excessive speeds.

Swanson, who said all officers are bracing for expected snow-related crashes, urges all drivers to slow down and increase the distance between vehicles. "Give yourself a chance to divert and brake," he said.

### **Winter Survival Kit**

- Ice scraper/snowbrush
- Shovel
- Sand or other type of traction aid
- Booster cables
- Road flares or warning lights
- Gas line antifreeze
- Flashlight and batteries
- First-Aid kit
- Fire extinguisher
- Small tool kit
- Extra clothing and footwear
- Non-perishable energy food, like chocolate or granola bars, juice, instant coffee, tea, soup and bottled water
- Candles and a small tin can to hold the candle
- Waterproof matches

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