

# Winter Driving Safety

By

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## **2009 FATAL COAL MINE ACCIDENT ALERT #11**

Edwin, a 47 year old rock truck driver, suffered fatal injuries in a vehicle accident at 1:50 a.m. on Saturday, September 5, 2009. Edwin completed his normal work shift at 1:30 a.m. and was leaving the mine property in his personal pick-up truck via the entrance road. A co-worker had left the parking area just before the victim; the victim caught up with the co-worker's pick-up truck and attempted to pass on the left of the road. Edwin apparently lost control of his vehicle and struck a 6" concrete-filled gate post before flipping over and coming to rest in the middle of the entrance road. Edwin was pronounced dead at the accident site by a county coroner. He had 48 weeks surface mining experience, all at this mine.

# Driving Hazards

- Driving a vehicle is a significant hazardous exposure for every worker
- For office workers, driving to and from work is likely the biggest risk they take each day
- As winter approaches, road hazards become more pronounced:
  - Ice and snow on the road and on your windows
  - Fogged-up windshields
  - Exposure to cold if the car breaks down
  - Darkness: the days are short and the nights longer

# Prepare and Maintain Your Car

- Battery: Have it checked and replaced if needed
- Tuning: Have your car inspected and tuned up, check the coolant level and proper concentration
- Brakes: Have your brakes checked - does the ABS work? Does your emergency brake work?
- Lights: Check all your lights – you will need them
- Tires: Consider mounting snow tires and/or studded tires (where permitted). Ensure sufficient tread
- Heater: Make sure it works, especially the defroster
- Tools: Keep an ice scraper, broom and shovel handy
- Windshield washer fluid: Keep it topped up

# Prepare Your Car, continued

- Consider carrying sandbags in your trunk for extra weight and to spread sand on ice for better traction
- Carry extra clothes (jacket, hat, gloves, boots) and a blanket in the car to keep you and others warm if you get stranded and need to wait or walk for help
- Keep your gas tank full – fill up in the evening
- Keep a number handy for emergency services (towing, AAA etc.)

# Driving

- Adjust your speed to road conditions
- Bridge decks may be icy
- On a wide and open road with no other cars around you, test how slippery the road is by carefully applying your brakes
- Remember that 4-wheel drive improves traction but not braking: All cars have 4-wheel brakes
- Maintain increased following distance
- Expect longer braking distances at intersections, especially when going downhill
- Be careful not to slip as you get into or out of your vehicle

# Allow Extra Time

- Take extra time for travel so that you are not rushed. Driving defensively is most important under difficult winter conditions
- Clean your windshield and ALL windows and lights from ice and snow. Have the engine running and the defroster blowing to assist. Never warm up the engine in confined spaces (CO-poisoning)
- Clean snow off you hood, roof and trunk so that it does not obstruct your vision or get blown off to land on the car behind you

# Practice Driving on Snow and Ice

- Find a large, empty parking lot and test how your car reacts as the ABS kicks in or if the wheels lock
- Practice counter-steering to recover from a skid
- Experience the safe speed at which you can still control your car in a sudden evasive maneuver
- Practice emergency stops while controlling the steering

# Drive Safely - Always

- Report hazardous conditions to your supervisor and to your co-workers
- Check announcements about office closures, road conditions etc. before you leave.
- And, most important:  
Call your boss and tell him/her that you cannot come to work if conditions are too hazardous. Better safe than sorry!