

February 2012

Winter driving tips

Staying in control on snow and ice – 6 February 2012

Europe in winter

Anyone heading to Europe in February knows to expect cold weather and adverse conditions, but the cold snap gripping the continent in 2012 is unprecedented. The icy Siberian blast claimed over 100 lives.

It's also causing massive disruption to transport. London's Heathrow airport, one of the busiest in the world, pre-emptively cancelled a third of all flights on the weekend of the 4th/5th. Italy ordered trucks off the roads for a week. European rail operators were advising customers to expect long delays.

One traveller reported this weekend his flight from London to Bangkok was held on the tarmac at Heathrow. Meals were served, movies played, but the scenery out the window didn't change. They eventually were able to depart 8 hours after the scheduled time!

Renting a car

If you HAVE to be somewhere in Europe during a big freeze and the trains and planes aren't running, it's tempting to hire a car and do it yourself.

Be warned, especially if you are unused to wintry conditions, driving can be really dangerous. You could spend 8 hours or more stuck in your car in a snowdrift – those movies and hot meals on the delayed Heathrow flight are starting to look like luxury!

Driving tips

The first is to play it easy and even on both the brake and accelerator. Any sudden changes can cause you to lose grip.

Set your speed before entering a corner. A change halfway through a turn could easily throw you into a slide so brake well ahead of the curve. If you start to skid, you'll retain more grip if all your wheels are moving, so back off the brake and stay away from the accelerator. The rule of thumb is to turn into the skid to try and get your wheels going the same way as you are. If the back of the car is sliding, don't panic, just slowly and smoothly turn the wheel the way the rear is moving. Sometimes you might overdo it and the back will lash out in the opposite. Never fear, just keep gently correcting until you're back in line.

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Pack extra clothing and warm blankets in the car. Put some snacks and water in the survival bag, maybe even a thermos of hot tea. If you're renting a car, see if you can get one with GPS and an emergency 'panic' button to summon help.

If you are stranded, stay with the car, it's your best chance of surviving. Outside temperatures, especially at night will quickly cause hypothermia, and unless you find help quickly you'll be in deadly trouble.

Contact us

Should you have any further queries please refer to your SureSave Product Disclosure Statement and Certificate of Insurance or contact our Hotline on 1300 208 998 or +61 2 8263 0491 or email info@suresave.net.au