

If you have any questions or comments regarding SHEQual issues please contact your local SHEQual Advisor or the SHEQual Department.

## SHEQual Bulletin Winter Driving Tips

MWH have been made aware of the following information from the training company Peak Performance who conducted driver awareness sessions for MWH in 2010.

### Before you even consider setting out

- Is your journey really necessary or can you use public transport instead?
- Have you checked the weather forecast for your intended route?
- Have you checked for road blockages and diversions for your intended route?
- Do you have a method of taking alternative routes if you have to? If it's snowy can you avoid going up (and down!) hills for instance?
- Can you stick to main routes as they are normally cleared first?
- Honestly assess your experience in the prevailing driving conditions and be aware of your own and the vehicles limitations.
- Has your vehicle been serviced as required by the maintenance schedule.
- Do you have breakdown cover and emergency equipment (see below) in the vehicle in case you are stranded in it overnight or even longer?
- Charge your mobile setting off and carry an in car charger with you.
- Do you have sufficient fuel for the round trip in case fuel stations are closed?
- Do not attempt a journey if you are ill or have been without sleep; you will probably be doing two 'night' drives when driving in the winter months which make the drive more tiring.



### Before you actually set out



- Do not leave your keys in the vehicle whilst unattended (if the vehicle is taken with your keys in it this may invalidate your insurance) when demisting and preparing the vehicle.
- Clear all glass (including light lenses) of snow, ice, frost or mist before setting out.
- Clean off your wipers and ensure your washer bottle full and has proper additive to stop it freezing?
- Free the wipers from the screen before first use if the temperature is sub zero.
- Check that all vehicle lights are working properly and use dipped headlights on the move.
- Set the radio to the station that gives the best traffic information.
- Acknowledge that braking distances in sub zero conditions can be 10 times the normal distance and that you will need to drive slower and leave more space to the front.

## Once on the move:

### Motorways

- Minimise distractions – sub zero weather calls for 100% concentration.
- Driving in adverse weather is more tiring, plan staged stops into your journey.
- Ice forms on the top of lorries and trailers which breaks free as the lorry thaws as they travel at speed causing a large falls of ice onto the road.
- Watch for and comply with matrix warning signs.
- Beware of Gritters, move past them smoothly and in a lane that is as far away from the Gritter as possible.
- If snowing steadily, be prepared to stop periodically to clear off headlights and tail lights.
- Watch for spray from snow or slush as vehicles change lanes.



### A Roads



- Make sure you keep within posted speed limits, be smooth with all steering, accelerator and braking inputs.
  - Leave as much space around you as you can and at all times, be defensive.
  - If there are vehicles in front with a thick layer of snow on the vehicle roof or bonnet the snow can break loose at speed, land on your windscreen and obscure your vision.
- Cold tyres will never give as much grip as warm ones as the tread cannot flex to the road surface.
  - Be aware that your direction of travel may mean that you experience loss of vision due to glare.
  - Other drivers may cause you to lose vision by not dipping their headlights, look to the left hand roadside and use this to navigate past the hazard.

### B Roads

- Think ahead - water will collect in dips and form ice, snow drifts will build up adjacent to gaps in walls or hedgerows.
- Open bridges will ice up before surrounding roads as freezing air cools the underside; areas of road in the shade of hedges or trees will still be frozen even if the main road is not.
- If it starts to snow heavily don't be fearful of fresh unpacked snow – it provides more grip than compressed snow.
- Do not be tempted to follow other vehicles closely up or down hills let them clear the hazard before attempting to follow.



## Urban Roads



- Pedestrians wear dark clothing in winter that is difficult to see.
- Pedestrians wear hats, hoods and umbrellas in poor weather and these can reduce their field of vision.
- Only use fog lights in less than 100m visibility, see and be seen.
- Other drivers may just be starting their journey and still have misted up or snow covered screens, they may not be able to see you.
- Driving in and out of urban areas where the lighting levels are high may affect your night vision.

## Parking & Manoeuvring

- Park your vehicle away from other vehicles (they are usually near the building entrance).
- Wind down the driver's window as this will assist you hear the movement of other vehicles which are much quieter when on snow.
- Reverse park to so you to have the best view when departing.
- Before you drive off be allow your vision to adjust from the high level lighting of the building or activity you have just been undertaking.
- Make the same vehicle checks before moving off that you have made when starting the journey.
- Use 2nd gear when moving off in snow as this will reduce the road wheel to slip.



## Personal Safety



- Inform someone of your expected arrival time at your destination and your contact number.
- Do not leave your vehicle unlocked when not inside, such as refuelling or stopping for a break, even if you are just cleaning the lights.
- When you stop do not choose remote areas, use service stations or similar facilities.
- Do not unlock your vehicle until you are next to it and have had a look around.

## Getting stranded

- If you become stranded, stay with the vehicle and use its lights horn etc to attract attention.
- Run the engine for about 10 minutes at a time to utilise the heater but do not run it all the time.
- Ensure that you can open and close at least one window to allow ventilation.
- Put on all spare clothing whilst you are still warm.
- If there are other motorists who are also trapped consider all getting into one vehicle and take turns in sleeping.
- Monitor traffic information but do not leave the radio on all the time.



## General tips

- If a skid starts, don't panic. No matter where the vehicle is pointing keep looking where you want the vehicle to go, as this is the reference point for how much you are offline.
- Calmly and smoothly remove the cause, usually too much speed for the conditions, excessive steering or brake application, steer into the skid.
- If the weather is hovering around the zero mark be prepared for the formation of black ice (caused by rain falling on an already frozen surface) and adjust speed accordingly.
- Driving in a snow blizzard or fog can be mesmerising. Maintain an active eye scanning routine. Varying focal responses will keep you alert and maintain points of reference.

## Suggested Safety Kit



At least a litre of drinkable fluid; 4 X energy bars; waterproof boots; blanket; winter jacket; scarf; gloves; hat; reflective jacket; piece of old carpet; snow shovel; torch and auxiliary power lead connectable beacon lamp; reflective warning triangle; sponge; paper and pencil (not a biro!) mobile telephone.