

*Editor's Note: Association Newsletter Article – December 2010*

*Contact: Amy Statkevics (303.361.4769, amy.statkevics@pinnacol.com)*

## **Ice and Snow? Take It Slow!**

Here's a cold fact about winter driving: The leading cause of death during winter storms is transportation accidents. The good news is that by preparing your car for the winter season and knowing how to drive in snow and ice, your travels this winter — for work or for play — can be safer and less stressful.

### *Before a winter storm:*

- Know what your car can and cannot do in the snow. Find out whether you have front, rear, part-time or full-time four-wheel drive; antilock brakes; traction control; and stability control. Then make sure you know how all these things work and how they help or won't help you. It's a good idea to practice driving in an empty parking lot on a snowy day so you know what to expect from your car under winter-driving conditions.
- Keep an emergency kit in your car with the following items: A car charger for your mobile phone; a snowbrush, ice scraper, collapsible shovel and bag of sand or kitty litter (to help with traction); extra windshield-washer fluid; an emergency blanket; warm gloves, hat, jacket and boots; jumper cables; water and non-perishable snacks; a small LED flashlight; and flares and/or reflective triangles for visibility.
- Check your antifreeze level; fill your windshield-wiper reservoir with winter fluid; check your wiper blades to make sure they clean the windshield effectively; and replace tires that have worn spots or inadequate tread depth. Consider snow tires if you regularly drive in unplowed areas, even if you have all-wheel drive; they will not only help you get started, but also increase your traction when braking and turning.
- Keep your gas tank close to full. If you get stuck or stranded, the engine will be your only source of heat. You can run the engine indefinitely at idle (without harming it) to stay warm as long as you have gas.
- Listen to the radio for the latest road conditions or call 303.639.1111 for recorded Colorado road and weather information.

### *During the drive:*

- Try to avoid bridges, overpasses, off-ramps and areas where water crosses pavement, as these are usually the first places to develop black ice. If you cannot plan your trip to bypass these hazards, be sure to slow down when approaching them.
- During adverse conditions, keep a safe distance — three car lengths for every 10 miles per hour — between you and the car in front of you. Remember that trucks take longer than cars to stop, so if you see a truck approaching, don't cut in front of it.

- Don't get overconfident if you have four-wheel drive. It won't help you stop any faster.
- Do everything slowly and gently while driving. Keep in mind that in the snow, tires are always just barely grabbing the road. Accelerate slowly and gently, turn slowly and gently, and brake slowly and gently. Rapid movements lead to skids and loss of control.
- If the rear end of your car starts to fishtail back and forth, slow down until you feel all four tires grip the road. Resist the temptation to brake. If you brake, do so gently. If you have anti-lock brakes, apply gentle, steady pressure.
- If you start to skid, don't panic. Remove your foot from the accelerator, take a deep breath, and turn the steering wheel in the direction the car is sliding.
- In the event of an accident or breakdown, put out flares or reflective triangles to mark your location, then return to your car, call for help, and stay warm while you wait. Crack the window a bit while the car is idling, and be sure to get out periodically and remove snow from behind the tailpipe to keep it unobstructed.

For more information on winter-driving safety, contact your Pinnacol marketing manager.