# [***Winter terrorland***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KH-0VS0-00K4-14MP-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

For Michigan residents, this time of year is the scariest to be behind the wheel. It only takes these three tips of advice however to be safe -- slow down, pay attention and stay off your ***cell phone***!

If only we lived in Florida. Doesn't that cross the mind of countless Michigan residents every winter when our state (especially the West Michigan area) gets dumped on with tons and tons of snow? Sure, the snow might turn an otherwise brown and drabby landscape into a beautiful, glistening wonderland, which causes the ski resorts and snowmobiling enthusiasts to leap with joy, but at the same time, the snow causes some major disadvantages. The big gripe with Michigan residents is the pain-in-the-butt slippery roads and terrible driving conditions that reek havoc on our cars. Seeing countless cars resting in ditches during or after a blizzard is just about as common as seeing your waste line expand after eating so much during the holiday season. In both cases, it can be avoidable, and in both cases you need to be smart to prevent such a terrible thing to happen. (Or maybe you just need to stop eating Christmas cookies?)

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According to the Michigan Department of Transportation, there are several driving tips one can use to help them avoid those lovely costs of a tow truck. Many of them are simply using common sense, such as keeping your cars windows, mirrors and lights clear of snow and ice, knowing the current road conditions and weather forecasts before you venture out onto the highways and reducing your speed. Other tips that one might not think about include leaving a few minutes early to allow extra time to get to your destination, starting out slowly in the lowest gear, which is also recommended by many auto manufacturers, be aware of potentially icy areas such as shady spots and bridges, keep a safe distance of at least five seconds behind other vehicles and trucks that are plowing the road, don't pass a snowplow or spreader unless it is absolutely necessary-treat them as you would an emergency response vehicle, don't park along a street because snowplow drivers cannot fully clear a road if cars are in their way and finally, keep an emergency winter driving kit in your car in case you are stranded in the freezing temperatures for long periods of time.

Another tip that should be on there but isn't, is pay attention! So many times if you have complete focus on the road you can easily correct your car from sliding across the road or from avoiding another car that might be sliding toward yours. Too often drivers are distracted from other passengers in the car, from eating while driving or from the very stupid mistake of trying to talk on their ***cell phone*** while driving.

In a study released by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis, ***cell phones*** were responsible for about 6 percent of U.S. auto accidents each year, killing an estimated 2,600 people and injuring 330,000. Sure it is important to keep in contact with your loved ones during the winter break, but at least pull over to a rest area or gas station to talk. Driving during winter months simply requires too much of your attention to be also focusing on a conversation at the same time. While they definitely provide a hazard for driving during a winter, ***cell phones*** become a valuable commodity in case your car dies and your stranded on the side of the highway when its 5 degrees outside.

So be smart when you're driving this winter! A little common sense can go a long way when you're behind the wheel. Your loved ones shouldn't mind that it took you a little longer to get to their place, just as long as you are safe.

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