

## I Need Tire Chains...Now What?



During winter, oftentimes storms will bring fresh snowfall to the San Bernardino Mountains, therefore, it's important to consider the realities of traveling in winter conditions and take necessary precautions such as carrying tire chains and knowing how to install them.

### FAQs

#### 1. Do I really need chains?

In winter, you will need to carry tire chains or other traction devices in your vehicle whether or not you actually use them. You will need to adhere to all chain control restrictions as Caltrans issues them, including full road closures.

*"As defined in Section 605 of the California Vehicle Code (CVC), tire traction devices are designed to improve vehicle traction, braking, and cornering upon snow or ice-covered surfaces."*

Road conditions and chain restriction locations can be found on the [Caltrans Quickmaps](#) feature. It is recommended that you stay up to date with road conditions as they can change quickly and without warning. You can also download the Caltrans Quickmaps app to your smart phone in order to monitor road conditions while working in the field.



Caltrans QuickMap   
California Department of Transportation

#### 2. How do I find the right chains for my tires?

Contact Fleet Management's Parts Room at **909-387-7861** to order chains. Be sure to have the tire size for your vehicle before your call, and the Parts Room will order the correct size of chains to use on your county vehicles. The tire size can be found on the outer wall of the tire (see figure below).



Fleet recommends contacting them 2-3 days prior to when you plan to travel in areas that may require chains.

### 3. What kinds of traction devices are there?

Apart from link-type tire chains, [Alternative Traction Devices](#) include metal cable chains, plastic or vinyl hub cap anchored devices, and other synthetic materials like Auto Socks. It's important to refer to your vehicle's manufacturer guide for guidance on chain/traction sizing and specifications.

Keep in mind that Caltrans and California Highway Patrol reserve the right to prohibit any vehicle from entering a chain control area if it's determined that traction devices do not meet CVC, Section 605 requirements.



### 4. Which tires do I put chains/traction devices on?

Chains and traction devices are to be installed on the wheels of your drive axle. Refer to your vehicle guide to determine if your vehicle is front axle or rear axle drive. All-wheel drive vehicles and 4-wheel drive vehicles may have chains installed on either drive axle, but the rear axle is preferred unless the vehicle manufacturer recommends the front axle.

### 5. How do you even put chains/traction devices on?

Follow the step-by-step instructions found in your tire chain kit. However, if you're a visual learner, here is a great video to watch from the Tranbc.ca website: <https://www.tranbc.ca/2011/10/28/safety-first-8-steps-to-installing-winter-tire-chains/>

Additionally, employees can contact the Fleet Auto Shop at **909-387-7859** to ask to be shown how to install tire chains on their county vehicles.

#### **6. How fast can I drive with tire chains?**

Generally, 20 to 30 mph is the recommended speed limit for driving with snow chains. This helps prevent chains from breaking and from potentially damaging your vehicle. Do not drive on dry roads with chains as it can significantly wear down both the chains and your tire tread.

#### **7. Can studded tires and snow tires replace the need to carry/install chains?**

No. Though studded tires are legal in California from Nov. 1 until Apr. 30 each year, studded tires are not considered tire traction devices and may not be used in lieu of chains. Snow tires have the designation "Mud & Snow" or an abbreviation such as "M-S," "M+S," or "M/S" marked on the tire sidewall. Tires without this designation are NOT considered snow tires. Snow tires must also have at least 6/32-inch (3/16") of tread depth (about 1/2 of the original tread depth). Same as studded tires, snow tires may not be used in lieu of chains.

#### **8. The manufacturer of my vehicle recommends that chains not be installed on it. Do I still have to carry/wear chains?**

Yes. Many vehicles that don't accommodate conventional link-type chains may accommodate Alternative Traction Devices. Bottom line, if chain control is in effect, you must comply for your safety and the safety of others.

#### **9. I have a 4-Wheel or All-Wheel drive vehicle and I'm towing a trailer. Do I need chains?**

You need to use chains if you're towing a trailer. If the trailer has brakes, you must have at least one axle chained.

#### **10. What do the chain control statuses mean? R1, R2, etc.?**

**R1:** Chains are required on all vehicles except passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks under 6,000 pounds gross weight and equipped with snow tires on at least two drive wheels. Chains must be carried by vehicles using snow tires. All vehicles towing trailers must have chains on one drive axle. Trailers with brakes must have chains on at least one axle.

**R2:** Chains are required on all vehicles except four-wheel-drive vehicles under 6,500 pounds gross weight and equipped with snow tires on all four wheels. Chains for one set of drive wheels must be carried by four-wheel-drive vehicles using snow tires.

**R3:** Chains are required on all vehicles without exception.

**R4:** Road closure

## Things to Remember

- Whenever it is feasible, employees should reschedule inspections and other assigned duties to avoid traveling in areas when chains are required.
- It is recommended that you carry extra supplies in your vehicles such as a jack, a shovel, kitty litter, and ice scrapers to help manage snow/ice conditions.
- Carry extra food, water, and blankets in your vehicle as traffic can cause severe delays at any time of day.
- It is best to travel on a full tank of gas in case you need to reroute, and it is recommended that you keep your phone charged in case you need to find directions or call for help along the way.



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