

SUBJECT: Travel Safety

REGULATORY STANDARD: None

DATE: May 2000

Introduction

Many Montana Tech employees travel regularly as part of their job duties. This section on travel safety contains many useful guidelines and tips for safe travel.

Driver Responsibilities

Drivers of Montana Tech vehicles have many responsibilities. The following guidelines will help ensure safe travel for employees. Drivers should:

- Practice lawful safe driving procedures at all times, including following the posted speed limit.
- Ensure that everyone wears a seat belt and doors are closed when vehicle is moving.
- Ensure that passengers do not extend appendages out of vehicle.
- Stop vehicle if passengers become disruptive.
- Stop 6-8 feet from passengers letting passengers walk to the vehicle when picking them up along curbside.
- Never leave the engine running when filling the gas tank.
- Never leave a vehicle unattended when the engine is running.
- Never stop or park in the main travel portion of a roadway.
- If passengers must ride in the back of a pickup truck, make sure they are sitting in the bed of the truck, not along the sides.

Traveling in Extreme Cold, Ice or Snow

Winter travel in Montana can be extremely hazardous. Before driving the vehicle, remove snow or ice accumulations from all windows. If the door lock is frozen, use a chemical defroster or a hair dryer to unfreeze lock.

Starting Vehicle

- If the car does not start, check battery fluid. Try to boost the battery. Follow these guidelines for “jump-starting” a battery:
 1. Find someone with a battery of the same voltage.
 2. Place the two vehicles in position so that the cables reach from battery to battery.
 3. With caps of both batteries off, first hook up the cables on the live battery. The red cable connects to the positive (+) post.
 4. On the dead battery, hook the positive cable (RED) to the positive post (RED or +) then hook up the negative cable to the engine block of the vehicle to be started.

5. Run the engine of the booster vehicle for a few minutes at fast idle. Try to start the engine of the car with the dead battery. If it starts, remove cables in reverse order and let engine run.
- Starting fluid is also an option, for a vehicle that will not start. That is least advisable, however, because of the volatile nature of the fluid. Have a fire extinguisher on hand when using this product.

When the vehicle has started, let the engine warm up at least a couple of minutes before driving; especially in cold weather.

Driving In Extreme Conditions

- Speed should be reduced because stopping takes much longer when roads are wet, snowy or icy. Visibility is often reduced as well.
- Four wheel drive and front wheel drive vehicles with snow tires and anti-lock brakes are preferred for roads with snow or ice. MISCONCEPTION! Four wheel drive does not mean you have “four wheel stop”.
- When pulling out or traveling uphill, use highest gear possible to apply less power to wheels and prevent tire spinning. DO NOT “GUN” ENGINE!
- When going downhill, use the lowest gear possible to slow momentum. CAUTION! Too low of gear will lock wheels.
- Sudden braking can cause vehicle to slide out of control, especially on slippery roads. Your most effective braking technique depends on the vehicle’s brake system.
 - Ø For vehicles with anti-lock brakes, press firmly on the brake pedal. You should feel a jerky response, which is normal.
 - Ø For vehicles with regular brakes, pump the brake pedal; don’t slam on the brake pedal.
- Tire chains should be applied only when extra traction is required.
- Disengage cruise control when driving on slippery roads. Cruise control can make wheels spin.
- If skidding does occur, the steps below may enable you to regain control of your vehicle.
 1. Ease off accelerator pedal.
 2. Turn steering wheel in direction of skid until control is regained.
 3. If an accident is inevitable, try to hit something that will lessen damage like a snow bank. Avoid intersections if possible.
- Beware of ruts that can high center your vehicle or cause loss of control when you try to avoid them.
- Use caution when approaching bridges; they freeze faster than normal roadways.
- Shaded areas of roadways may be covered with ice. When you reach these shaded areas, keep your wheels straight.

Getting Stuck

If you get stuck, the following techniques may help you free the vehicle.

1. Do not panic or overexert the engine when stuck.
2. Clear a path in front of and behind vehicle.
3. Spread sand in cleared path of wheels. Floor mats or branches are a good alternative. Use anything to give wheels traction.
4. Use a “rocking technique.” Parking brake may be partially engaged to keep from losing traction as quickly.
 - Accelerate forward until you start to lose traction. **Do not lose traction completely!**
 - Quickly move into reverse and proceed in same manner.
 - Repeat the first two procedures until enough ground is gained to regain traction.

Trapped In Vehicle

If you become trapped in a vehicle or become lost, **DO NOT PANIC!** Think through your problem carefully. Indicate that you are in trouble with signaling devices, hazard lights, or by raising the hood. Use your cell phone if you have one to contact the highway patrol. Stay in the vehicle unless there is a house or other form of help very close. If you run the engine to keep warm, protect yourself from carbon monoxide poisoning.

- Check exhaust pipe to see if it could be clogged from snow. Clear any snow.
- If two or more people are present, take turns keeping watch for help. If you are alone, stay awake.
- Remember your horn. Keep sounding the horn at regular intervals.

Safety Devices, Winter Survival Kit, and First Aid Kit

Each vehicle should be equipped with a spare tire, and a jack that is maintained regularly. Other safety equipment that may prove valuable include: a first aid kit, visual hazard signals such as flares, a fire extinguisher, and a winter survival kit.

A winter survival kit should include winter clothing such as gloves, boots, hat, and blankets or sleeping bag. It should also contain a basic tool kit with flash light, shovel, traction sand, tow chain, rope, ax and saw. Other items to consider for your survival kit include starter fluid, extra oil, de-icer, booster cables and signaling devices.

A traveler’s first-aid kit should also be carried, with any medications taken by the driver or passengers included. Other items should include:

- Acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin for headaches, etc. Have at least two aspirin available in case of a heart attack
- Motion sickness medication
- Bandages of assorted sizes
- Triangular bandage for use as a sling

- Elastic wraps for ankle, knee or elbow injuries
- Gauze in rolls, 2-inch and 4-inch pads for larger cuts
- Adhesive tape
- Scissors, tweezers, safety pins
- Antiseptic wipes
- Antibiotic ointment and hydrogen peroxide to disinfect and clean wounds
- Instant-activating cold packs
- Gloves to protect hands and reduce risk of infection
- CPR mask

Summer Driving Precautions

- Temperatures in a locked car sitting in the summer sun can climb from 78° to 100° in just 3 minutes and up to 125° in 6-8 minutes. Never leave children or pets in an unattended car even for a minute.
- Keep hydrated with water and fruit juice.
- Dress lightly in the car.
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes and give you clearer vision.
- Take a break at least once every two hours. Avoid driving when tired.

General Travel Precautions

- Know your destination and carry a map.
- Give your itinerary to a co-worker or friend.
- Always lock your car doors, even while driving.
- If you are a woman, consider wearing a baseball cap or place one in the window of the vehicle.
- If your vehicle breaks down on the road, pull as far as you can off to the side, turn on your emergency flashers, raise the hood, attach a white handkerchief or article of clothing to the antenna, get inside, lock the doors and wait for help from a police officer or highway patrolman. Use your cell phone if you have one to call for help. If a motorist stops, talk to them through a crack in the window and ask them to go for help.
- Park in safe, well-lit areas.
- Before leaving your vehicle, scan for any loiterers or suspicious people.
- Before entering a vehicle, check the back seat and under the car to see if anyone is hiding.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers.
- If you are being followed, drive to a safe location such as a well-lit gas station, police station, emergency room, or fire station.

Hotel Safety

- Stay at a reputable facility.
- When registering, sign your last name and first initial only. Do not use titles or degrees. Always keep your room number private.
- Familiarize yourself with the facility; know where the exits and fire extinguishers are, and if there is security staff.
- When absent from your room, leave lights and a TV on.
- Do not open the door unless the identity of the person is known. Use the peep hole if there is one.

Cell Phones

Having a cell phone when traveling is a good idea and has saved many lives. However, people who talk on cell phones while driving are distracted and less prepared to avoid an accident. They have a 34% higher risk of having a collision than those not using a cell phone. If at all possible, wait until you can pull over to use your phone. If you absolutely must use it while you are driving, follow these guidelines:

- Never dial while driving; wait until stopped at a light or stop sign or pull over.
- Do not talk in busy traffic.
- Avoid arguments or conversations requiring deep thought while driving.
- Stay in the slow lane and do not pass vehicles while on the phone.
- Do not take notes while driving.