

Let's reduce winter collisions

By Sarah Sobanski

There is always an increase in accidents over the winter months. Harsher weather means harder driving conditions and human error is increased through overconfidence. Those who own transport companies need to make sure they have the right [Fleet insurance for HGVs and Lorries](#) to ensure they're covered for any damages they may experience. Commuters need to give each other extra space and reduce their speed further if there's someone too close behind them. Fuel levels need to be checked as and winter tires need to be fitted. The list of precautions goes on and on.

When driving past the OPP station in Bancroft I often try to peek into the parking lot to see if there's anyone hanging out with a speed gun - we're all human. Recently, when applying my not-so-eagle-eyes I noticed a "Reduce speed in winter conditions" sign instead.

The new sign is thanks to a joint initiative between Hastings Prince Edward Public Health and Bancroft OPP as a part of the Quinte Region Traffic Coalition Safe Winter Driving Campaign, according to Const. Philippe Regamey.

"It was made possible through funding received from the Ministry of Transportation Road Safety Community Partnership Program," he explained. "The message is simple. Most motor vehicle collisions are due to driver error and could be avoided if the driver only slowed down and drove according to road conditions."

The sign is a pointed reminder, driven home by the fact that you're already slowing down because you're driving past an OPP station.

All kidding aside, it's all too often that you hear of an accident that took a life on the radio or in the news. Those moments seem even more frequent this time of year. It's always the same causing factors, the same culprits: black ice, freezing rain and/or snow storms equalling out to poor visibility and an increased risk for losing control.

"Quite often we blame the weather or road conditions but, how can multiple cars travel down a portion of the highway, or go around the corner in the same weather, with the same road conditions, and then one car goes off the road and rolls their vehicle?" asked Regamey. "Speed [would] most likely [be a] factor in [a] collision [like that]."

I recently saw a Facebook post from a friend that detailed her first experience losing control of her vehicle. It was snowing and she ignored it, continuing at 120 kilometres an hour on a 400-series highway.

What rush is possibly worth your life or, possibly worse, someone else's?

I trust my X-Trail, I do. She's big, heavy and has four-wheel drive - but winter driving still intimidates me. You might chalk that up to inexperience - especially if you're a truck driver because it seems nothing phases you - but I'd chalk it up to intelligence.

Take it from a release by the Traffic Coalition and HPEPH: "Winter driving can be a challenge, but there are ways to make it easier and safer..."

Some considerations to take when heading out on winter roads include:

Ensure your vehicle is winter ready with a maintenance check-up. Consider installing four winter tires, top up your washer fluid and keep your gas tank at least half full. This includes going to Paintless Dent Repair specialists if your car's body has any dents because any body damage can make your car weaker during a collision and increase the chances of you getting injured.

Plan your route and leave yourself plenty of time for travel.

Use Ontario 511 to check road conditions.

Take time to clear ice and snow from your windows, lights, mirrors and roof.

Put away your cellphone and other distractions."

Sometimes you're destined to hit that patch of ice and you just have to play the cards you've been handed. But at least tips like these can reduce the chance that you'll have to.

As always, be safe!