FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED · WINTER ONE-PAGER

Winter Vehicle Kit

Ice, a whiteout or a closed interstate can leave you sitting in your car for hours. Pack for that.

1. **Where are you driving – how far from help?**
2. **Who's in the car – kids, elders, pets, meds?**
3. **How long could you be stuck?**
4. **Does anyone know your route and arrival time?**

1 Before the first snow: check the vehicle

	Tires	Battery	Wipers & glass	Fuel	Inside the car
Check	Pressure **when cold** – it drops as temperatures fall. Use the door-jamb number, not the sidewall. Check tread and lug nuts.	Have it tested; cold needs more power to start. Carry jumper cables or a jump-starter pack.	New blades for winter; winter (de-icer) washer fluid; test the defroster and all lights.	Keep the tank **at least half full** all winter, and full before a storm or a long trip.	Secure everything loose – a hard stop turns it into a missile.
Upgrade	**Winter tires** grip and stop far better on snow and ice than all-season tires. Chains if your route needs them – **practice putting them on** at home.	Know where the jump points are; keep the jump pack charged.	A glass treatment (rain repellent) helps visibility – re-apply about monthly.	Towing? Check trailer tire pressure and lug nuts before every trip.	Get it serviced before winter: coolant, belts, hoses, brakes.

Sources: NHTSA Winter Driving Tips, Ready.gov Car Safety, NWS winter safety. Read more: Preparedness for Winter Travel

2 The car kit – in a bin, all winter

- **Get unstuck:** collapsible shovel, ice scraper and brush, a bag of **kitty litter or sand** for traction, tow strap, and a tarp to kneel or lie on.
- **Be seen:** LED road flares (strobes you can set on the road or the roof), a bright signal panel or surveyor's flagging tape to tie to the antenna.
- **Stay warm: wool blankets** (warm even when wet); an extreme-cold sleeping bag for long or northern trips; winter boots, hand warmers.
- **Light and power:** flashlight with spare batteries – a battery one as backup to any rechargeable; a power bank and phone cable.
- **Fire and heat:** a small stove and fuel, a cook pot, several disposable lighters and long-burn matches. Propane lights may not work below zero.
- **And:** first-aid kit and a few days of any daily meds, paper maps, large heavy trash bags (ponchos, pack covers), hiking poles with snow baskets.

Freezing rain? Keep a lighter in your pocket. You can warm a key to open a frozen lock when the fob battery is dead.

3 Everyone in the car

- **A bag each.** Ideally every family member has their own get-home bag, swapped to its winter load now.
- **Layers, not cotton.** Wool socks, thermal underwear, gloves, a warm hat. Wet cotton pulls heat away and raises the risk of hypothermia.
- **Water that won't freeze solid.** Keep bottles in a small cooler or insulated bag. If they freeze, cut the bottle and thaw it in the pot.
- **Warm it before you drink it.** Ice-cold water or eating snow lowers your core temperature – melt and warm it first.
- **Food that needs no cooking** (bars, nuts), plus a few hot meals: freeze-dried or self-heating.

4 Tell someone, and stay in touch

- **File a "flight plan".** Route, stops, arrival time and check-ins – with family, or a volunteer travel-watch group such as CommsConnectUS.
- **No cell coverage on the route?** A satellite messenger with SOS, or a **ham license** ($35 for 10 years) with wide-area and linked repeaters programmed for the whole route (RepeaterBook).
- **Know before you go:** check the forecast and your state's **511** road conditions; carry a weather radio. GPS *and* paper maps – signs get covered by snow.

5 Driving on snow and ice

Never driven on snow? **Practice in an empty parking lot**: how the car brakes, how it skids, how your ABS feels (press firmly and hold – don't pump it). Slow down, leave far more room, and don't use cruise control on slick roads.

6 If you're stranded

Stay with the car
Unless shelter is very close
The car is your shelter and it's easier for rescuers to find. Wind-driven snow can disorient you in minutes.

Heat, safely
Carbon monoxide kills
Clear snow from the exhaust pipe first. Run the engine about **10 minutes an hour** with a window cracked open a little.

Be seen
Day and night
Bright cloth or flagging on the antenna; hazard lights; dome light on while the engine runs at night. Raise the hood once it stops snowing.

Keep warm
Conserve heat
Wrap up in blankets, head included. Huddle together. Move your arms and legs to keep the blood moving.

Don't overdo it
Shoveling in the cold
Shovel and push in short spells. Sweat soaks your clothes – and heavy exertion in the cold strains the heart.

Call and conserve
Phone, radio, satellite
Call 911 or text if you can; save battery between check-ins. Sleep in turns – one person stays awake.

7 Start here

1. **Check** Tires, battery, wipers, fluid and lights.
2. **Pack** Shovel, traction, blankets, light, flares in one bin.
3. **Dress** A winter bag and layers for each person.
4. **Fuel** Half a tank or more, all winter.
5. **Plan** Tell someone your route and arrival time.
6. **Practice** Chains on at home; braking in an empty lot.

Do it this weekend – before the first storm, not in it. **Track it:** Ready Ledger keeps a Vehicle Emergency Supplies checklist for each vehicle, checked and dated. Read more: Preparedness for Winter Travel · Comms · Ready Ledger

The full winter travel guide
fortunefavorstheprepared.com/winter-car-kit/
The QR code opens *Preparedness for Winter Travel*.
Checked against NHTSA, Ready.gov, the National Weather Service and CDC, November 2026.

Remember, Fortune Favors the Prepared
Semper Paratus, Semper Gumby