

29 December 2009

IAM says beware of Snowballs!

Heavy snow is forecast this week across much of the UK with the Met Office today issuing a severe weather warning. The IAM reminds drivers of the need for extra care on the roads in the holiday season.

As New Year approaches motorists are urged to refrain from driving too soon the morning after one too many Snowballs, G and T's or warming scotches.

It is likely that problems caused by these severe weather conditions will be compounded by the huge volume of motorists travelling to towns and shopping centres for the sales. Many of these drivers could also unknowingly be over the limit after boozy New Year celebrations.

"Snow and icy conditions are unfamiliar to a large number of drivers, and many are struggling with the weather and road conditions," said IAM Chief Examiner Peter Rodger.

"Our message to drivers is to assess the type of road you're driving on. Going too fast is dangerous, but going too slowly can cause real difficulties as well. In snow, you should drive slowly enough so you can stop, but also fast enough to give you the all-important momentum to deal with hills so you can avoid getting stuck and sliding back," he said.

Local authorities may have failed to grit some rural and minor roads, but gridlock conditions are likely to get worse as more drivers take to the road to find themselves a bargain in the 'January' sales.

"Give yourself plenty of time. Prepare your car. Listen to travel and weather bulletins and plan your route using the main roads as much as possible." Mr Rodger continued.

Mr Rodger said that common faults included cars travelling far too close to the vehicle in front, not allowing nearly enough room to stop, and overcautious driving, with drivers causing queues in their wake, particularly approaching slopes and hills.

Whilst most people are well-educated about the risks involved in drink-driving, many people aren't aware of the risk of driving the morning after.

If you drink 4 pints or 3 large glasses of wine during a night out it could take as long as 12 hours for the alcohol to leave your system. This means that if you haven't stopped drinking until 1am, then you are not going to be safe until after lunchtime the following day.

Mr Rodger said: "The current weather combined with alcohol and driving is a potent recipe for a cocktail of problems. The additional challenges of driving on snow and ice make the normal messages about not drinking and driving all the more important this New Year. The morning after effect has the potential to catch out many shoppers as well as those returning home after an extended break."

For those drivers who will be taking to the road over the next week, the IAM has repeated its advice for motorists:

Is your journey really necessary? If it is, plan it and give yourself plenty of time. Tell someone your intended route and how long you think it's going to take. Listen to the radio for details about road and weather conditions, and heed police warnings.

Clean the windscreen and windows using a demisting preparation. Check that screen washers are not blocked and that the screen washer bottle is topped up and has a winter additive to stop it freezing. Check that the windscreen wipers are in good condition and work effectively.



News Release (Continued)

Ensure that all lights, brake lights, indicators are working properly and the lenses are clean, and free of snow and ice.

Ensure that tyres are in good condition and are properly inflated.

Drive smoothly to avoid skids by braking, steering, acceleration, decelerating and gear changing very gently. If a skid occurs, no matter how strong the temptation, do not brake. Instead, lose speed by gently easing the pressure on the accelerator pedal and, if appropriate, de-clutch.

Keep your speed down and increase the safety gap between you and the vehicle in front – because your stopping distances increase dramatically and can take up to ten times longer to stop when the road is wet or icy.

ENDS

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ENDS ALL

1. The IAM (Institute of Advanced Motorists) directly influences the driving and riding of more than 100,000 full members in the UK and Ireland. Established in 1956, the IAM is today best known for the advanced driving test and the advanced driving course, which is available to car, motorcycle and commercial licence holders. The IAM has grown to become the UK's largest independent road safety charity, dedicated to raising driving standards, engaging with the road-using public and influencing road safety policy. The commercial division of the IAM operates through occupational driver training companies IAM Fleet UK and Drive & Survive.

2. A 2006 report by Brunel University, following an 18 month study, concluded that "advanced driver training produces safer drivers and lower accident involvement", with measurable improvements in knowledge, skills and attitude.

3. In January 2007, the IAM Motoring Trust was established as the Policy and Research Division to undertake research, promote practical policies, act as an advocate for safer roads, safer drivers and safer vehicles and encourage responsible motoring through education and training.

