

Winter Safety Kit for Your Car

Many people carry some basic safety equipment somewhere in their car – jumper cables, flares, shovel, safety cones, and tire-changing equipment. But if you want to be really safe, here are a few other items you may want to keep on hand:

Ice scraper – particularly in northern states, it’s essential to have a good-quality ice scraper. Now you can even get a heated ice scraper that plugs into your vehicle’s cigarette lighter to make it easier to scrape off that ice while you warm up your car. And while you’re scraping, be sure to clear the entire window, rather than just a “peep hole”! (You can find heated scrapers at [HYPERLINK "http://www.improvements.com" www.improvements.com](http://www.improvements.com).)

Blanket(s) – if your car is stuck in a snowstorm, extra blankets will help keep you warm. Consider the foil blankets like those used by long-distance runners. These are inexpensive (plan to spend \$1-\$2), lightweight, and easy to store, but can save your life in an emergency! (Foil blankets are available online in many locations, just search on keywords “foil survival blanket.”)

No-Battery Flashlights – “No Battery” flashlights come in many different styles. Some are hand-cranked, some are shaken, but any of them can be a lifeline in an emergency. These flashlights range in price from under \$10 to over \$50, you should probably read a product review before purchasing one, and are available on line as well as at hardware and home center stores, and at many drug stores.

Rock Salt/Ice Melting Crystals/Sand – a mid-winter staple, salt mixed with sand helps to melt ice and add traction if you find yourself stuck in a slippery situation. Carrying a supply in the back of your car provides you the added benefit of a little extra weight in your vehicle, which can give you a little extra traction on ice. A bag of kitty litter works well too!

Extra Clothing – including warm, waterproof mittens. In “state of emergency” winter situations, even the best rescue crews can leave you stranded overnight, and you’ll appreciate all the additional warm, dry clothing you can put on.

Food and Water – Consider stocking up on PowerBars, Trail Mix, or other high-calorie energy foods. These kinds of foods will keep you going longer than crackers and “munchie” foods! Also keep a large metal coffee can (or similar), with candles and matches inside, for melting snow for drinking. While you could simply eat snow to get needed water, rescuers only recommend it as a last resort – your body has to spend a lot of energy to melt the snow, and it cools your body from within, contributing to hypothermia.

Whistle – under blizzard conditions, visibility can be severely impaired. A simple, plastic whistle will help rescuers find you – and can be heard even over howling winds. You can even “whistle out” a Morse code “SOS”.

If you’re heading out on a long trip and bad weather is possible, double check to make sure to have some or all of these items along with you. Make sure your cell phone is fully charged, keep your gas tank full, and don’t forget, if at all possible, stay with your car! If you are stranded, it’s much easier for rescuers to spot your car than you.