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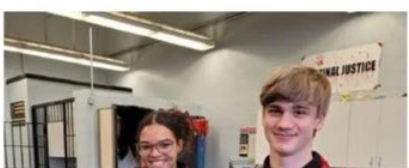


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COMMUNITY



Educator offers winter driving tips

BY JIM DIEHL
THE STANDARD-JOURNAL

MILTON — “The point is to get there, not how fast you get there.”

Those were words of caution concerning driving in winter weather from a retired Warrior Run School District educator, who still offers driver training through the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit (CSIU).

Doug McRoberts retired as a Warrior Run science teacher and driving instructor. As the school district experienced fewer students interested in the driving course, he became a driving instructor for CSIU.

“Before heading anywhere in winter weather, there are a few things to take into consideration before ever heading out on the road,” McRoberts said. “First and foremost, make sure the condition of your vehicle is in proper working order. Check your tires, be sure the tread passes inspection, and that your tires are properly inflated. And, be sure your motor is in good running condition.”

Mental preparation is also important.

“Know what conditions you’re getting yourself into,” McRoberts said.



PROVIDED

DOUG MCROBERTS

“Whether it be raining, snowing, or freezing, make sure you are mentally prepared to face whatever weather situations you might experience on your trip.”

He suggests scraping ice or frost off all of your vehicle’s windows before hitting the road. If there was snow, make sure you totally clean

all that off of your vehicle before heading out to drive.

“Within the last 10 to 15 years, laws have been placed on the books that will hold a driver responsible should snow or ice fly off their vehicle and injure someone or cause a wreck,” McRoberts said.

Speed is also one of the most important factors to

consider in winter driving.

“The slipperier the roadway the slower the speed,” McRoberts said. “When you know it’s going to be slippery, don’t be in a hurry. Being in a hurry and slippery roads are a bad combination. Allow yourself extra time in getting to your destination.”

On a slippery road, McRoberts said a driver should take their foot off of the accelerator if they begin to skid.

“Do not slam on the brakes, and steer into the skid,” he advised. “Skidding on icy surfaces are the result of over acceleration.”

He noted that caution should especially be exercised on rural roadways, which are sometimes later to be cleared than more heavily traveled roads.

“When coming to a sharp curve on those roadways slow down considerably before coming to it, even more slowly than you would normally so you don’t have to slam on your brakes,” said McRoberts.

During inclement weather, motorists should increase their following distances.

“Instead of a 4-second following time you should try to increase it to 7 or 8

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seconds, so as not to follow too closely behind other vehicles,” McRoberts said.

Sometimes when driving during the winter, motorists encounter snow squalls which produce white-out conditions.

“White-out conditions are hard to prepare for,” McRoberts said. “If you can’t see, put on your hazard lights, and pull off the roadway, and wait it out. If you can see during a white-out, slow down, and again put on your hazard lights so that motorists behind you can see your vehicle.”

Motorists often travel long distances during the holidays. McRoberts said there are things to consider when taking long road trips during the winter.

“Bring along a snow shovel or something to help dig your vehicle out with, also

some ashes or some sort of anti-skid is invaluable if you should happen to get stuck by the roadway,” McRoberts said. “Also bring along some warm blankets and always remember to put your hazard lights on if you do get stranded along the roadway. Putting your hazard lights on will also alert other motorists that you need help.”

With rain and quickly dropping temperatures, ice will be an issue.

“There again being prepared for the weather before heading out is of utmost importance, drive much more slowly than you normally would, and pay attention to the roadway looking for icy spots,” McRoberts said.

He noted that even four-wheel, all-wheel and front-wheel drive vehicles don’t perform well on icy roads.

“Just because you have four-wheel drive doesn’t mean a care-free ride, as the potential is still there for slipping and sliding,” McRoberts said. “Front-wheel drive vehicles are good for going up hills, while drivers of rear-wheel drive vehicles need to learn to gain momentum at the bottom of a hill instead of in the middle, to prevent the vehicle from slipping.”

A vehicle can hydroplane on a slushy roadway.

“Slow down considerably when approaching slushy, or watery patches, or snow drifting across roadways,” McRoberts advised.

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) also advises these tips for driving in winter weather conditions:

- Carry a winter emergency travel kit.
- Listen to weather and

travel advisories, but if you don’t have to travel in bad weather, don’t.

- Keep your gas tank at least half full.
- Slow down and increase following distance.
- Avoid sudden stops and starts.
- Beware of roads that may look wet, but are actually frozen, often referred to as “black ice.”
- Use extra caution on bridges and ramps, where ice can often form without warning.
- Carry a cellphone.
- Do not use cruise control while driving on snow-covered roads.
- State law requires you to turn on your headlights when your wipers are on.
- Use your low beams in particularly bad weather, especially in cases of heavy or blowing snow.
- Remove ice and snow

from windows, mirrors, and all vehicle lights before you drive and as often as needed.

- Do not park or abandon your vehicle on snow emergency routes.
- Do not pass or get between trucks plowing in a plow line.
- Make sure someone else knows where you are going and when you expect to arrive. In case you run into an emergency and need help, someone will know where to look for you.
- If you do become stranded, it’s better to stay with your vehicle until help arrives. Run the engine every hour or so, but make sure the tailpipe is clear and keep the downwind window cracked open.
- Do not drink and drive, and always wear your seat-belt.

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