



Under B.C. regulations
vehicles 11,794 kilograms or
more must carry steel chains.

Do you know when and how to chain up?

By Gillie Easdon

If you operate a heavy commercial vehicle and travel on B.C. highways, you are required by law to carry tire chains — or other suitable traction devices. The Winter Driver Safety Alliance has resources and tips on how to stay safe on the road this winter, as well as how to chain up safely and properly.

Casualties from crashes in B.C. skyrocket in winter months — from 126 on average in October, to 236 in December. “Conditions can change quickly on B.C. highways, especially for drivers leaving the Lower Mainland for more mountainous terrain. We want everyone to drive safely and get home to their families this winter,” says the Hon. Claire Trevena, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The Minister’s office is one of five main sponsors for the Winter Driving Safety Alliance, a joint provincial initiative that is supported by organizations committed to improving the safety of drivers during the winter months. Also included are WorkSafeBC, the Justice Institute of BC, the BC Roadbuilders and Heavy

Construction Association, and the Insurance Corporation of BC (ICBC). Their overall message is one of preparation when it comes to driving for work in the winter months.

Plan ahead

If you or your employees drive for work, you need to have a winter driving policy. “At a minimum, this policy needs to include the responsibilities for the employer, the supervisors, and the workers,” says Philip Choi, executive director at SafetyDriven – Trucking Safety Council of BC. SafetyDriven is one of the 19 members of the Winter Driving Safety Alliance. It offers help with safety program development, training, and resources for those in the trucking and moving and storage industries. “You should perform a pre-winter checkup and report any concerns to your supervisor,” adds Choi. “Keep your gas tank full to avoid condensation and freezing of fuel lines.”

SafetyDriven and the Winter Driving Safety Alliance also have the following tips:

- Always monitor current road and weather conditions on drivebc.ca.

- Be sure to have four identical winter tires and an emergency kit. As of October 2019, passenger vehicles driving on designated highways in B.C. must have four matched winter tires (three-peaked mountain and snowflake, or mud and snow) with at least 3.5 mm of tread depth. Carriers should consider investing in commercial vehicle winter tires.
- Let someone know your route and travel plans with an estimated time of arrival. If something changes, update them when it is safe to do so.
- Have an emergency plan. If you get stuck or stranded, don't panic. Stay with your vehicle for safety and warmth. If you have a cellphone and it is an emergency, call 911. Otherwise, call for roadside assistance.
- And don't forget, when the weather is poor, consider postponing your trip.

Tips for chaining up

If your work involves driving on roads that require chains, make sure every driver on your team is properly equipped with chains and knows how to chain up correctly before hitting the road — it takes some preparation. “As part of the Winter Driving Safety Alliance, we are sending the message that chaining up requires preparation and the right tools. Learning how to chain should not happen on the side of a busy highway,” says Trina Pollard, manager, Industry and Labour Services, WorkSafeBC. Chain use not only improves safety with traction, it also enhances control for you and other road users. By reducing incidents, chain use also helps minimize road closures and property damage.

- **When:** Always chain up when lights are flashing on designated chain up routes or when advised by overhead signs. You can also visit drivebc.ca or call 1.800.550.4997 to get more information about when to chain.

- **Where:** Select where you chain up carefully — the side of the road is not advisable. Keep an eye open for designated chain-up areas, accessible rest stops, and pullouts. Secure your vehicle, apply the parking brake and hazard lights, and turn off the engine. Ensure there is room for movement between you and any vehicle parked close by. Non-slip wheel chocks help secure the truck and trailer.
- **How:** Before heading out, make sure your chains are the right size for your tires. Do a practice run and follow the manufacturer's written instructions. When chains are on, do not exceed 50 km per hour and avoid bare pavement and hitting curbs. Following use, always inspect the chains for any damage.

For more information

The website shiftintowinter.ca has a number of resources to help you, including:

- The winter driving safety [online course](#)
- The employer [toolkit](#) that includes policy and procedures templates
- Information on [winter tires](#)

Road safety information can also be found at drivebc.ca and tranbc.ca. ☺

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