

LOCALNEWS

Tips to travel safe this winter

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Preparing for winter travel in advance could improve your family's safety and ease the stress of the holidays.

In a release from Kansas State Research and Extension, there are a number of things travelers need to remember when hitting the road this holiday season.

First, motorists should understand terminology related to winter, such as the difference between a winter weather watch and a winter weather warning, the release said.

A winter weather watch alerts travelers to developing adverse weather conditions. If a winter weather watch is announced, travelers should be aware that conditions are likely to become unfavorable. A winter weather warning means adverse conditions have arrived, and the challenges those conditions bring are already occurring.

Climatologist Mary Knapp pointed out that winter storms and blizzards are not identical, and winter travelers should pay attention to the announcement of these two.

A winter storm generally means cold temperatures and snowfall, with snow accumulation more than three inches, Knapp said. When warnings are announced, an indication of expected snowfall is given. Blizzards are less about the amount of snowfall and more about the conditions surrounding that. Blizzard

conditions involve winds of more than 30 miles per hour and visibility less than a quarter of a mile for at least three hours.

"After the storm is over, there may not be much snow accumulation with it," Knapp said. "The real problem with a blizzard is strong winds and very low visibility, which makes driving extremely hazardous."

Winter weather advisories, however, are predicting weather not expected to be dangerous.

"If you use normal precautions, you're likely to be able to continue your activities without many challenges," she said. "There might be a winter weather advisory when snowfall is expected to be a couple of inches. It's enough to inconvenience travelers, but not likely enough to create a hazardous situation."

The greatest challenge that can arise with a winter storm advisory is the transition rate from rain to snow, Knapp added.

"Typically, we can get an alert in advance of a winter storm pattern," she said. "Usually the trajectory is clear, and it's fairly easy to project what might be happening. However, we often have a rain event in advance of winter weather, and when that transition occurs makes a big difference on total accumulation."

Hazardous road conditions

As falling temperatures arrive, roadways begin freezing over. Changing road conditions can be



hazardous to motorists as temperatures fall, and rain turns to ice. Knapp said travelers should be aware of "black ice," a condition where road surfaces appear wet but are actually a frozen sheet of ice.

"Roadways tend to ice over most quickly on elevated surfaces, such as bridges and overpasses," she said. "That's where you're going to have the greatest danger of rapidly changing surface conditions."

To avoid the headache of being stranded, Knapp said it benefits travelers to know road conditions not only where they are, but also where they're going.

Prepare for emergencies

When you're on the road during the winter months, it's important to be prepared with a set of emergency items for your travels, Knapp said. Items to include in a winter travel kit are jumper cables, a flashlight with an extra set of batteries, gloves, a hat, blankets, a source of water and extra food, a shovel, salt or sand, and a towrope. Most of the kit can be left in your vehicle, she said, but be sure to bring fresh water for each trip to avoid frozen water.

"Another thing to keep in mind is quite often we don't carry the outdoor gear that we might normally, because we're in the car where it's warm and comfortable," Knapp said.

"You want to have, at least in the trunk, an extra layer. You may include boots or shoes that are more substantial than what you're wearing for the drive, just so that if you get stranded, you've got that extra layer of protection."

In today's world, we rely heavily on our cell phones. Even in ideal conditions, Knapp said, you run the risk of hitting dead zones where your cell phone's signal is compromised. Let others know where you're headed in case technology doesn't pull through.

If you're traveling with children or pets, have extra supplies on hand to increase their comfort, and avoid leaving the vehicle if you become stranded. If you have small children, make sure to pack diapers and a few changes of clothing.

Due to poor road conditions and low visibility, Knapp said it's important that travelers realize their fellow motorists' ability to respond in an emergency has decreased.

"If you're stranded, stay in your vehicle," she said. "Try to get the vehicle off the roadway if you can, even off the shoulder where you're out of the traffic lane. It will increase your safety."

Knapp said to travel during daylight hours for greater visibility, if possible.

State exports hit all-time high in Q3

MN DEED REPORT

Minnesota exports of manufactured, agricultural and mining products reached a record \$5.5 billion in the third quarter, a 5.8 percent increase from the same period a year ago, according to figures released by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

U.S. exports during the quarter were up 4.2 percent.

DEED said the state's largest export region was North America, where sales climbed 16 percent from a year ago to \$2.2 billion. Exports climbed 4 percent to \$1.7 billion in Asia while falling 5 percent to \$965 million in the European Union.

Among smaller markets, exports to the Australia-Pacific region leaped 19 percent to \$145 million, based largely on the strength of New Zealand, where exports climbed 172 percent to \$36 million.

"Minnesota's record quarter is another sign that our economy is on the right track," DEED Commissioner Katie Clark Sieben said in a release. "Strong exports create jobs, improve corporate profits and contribute to economic growth statewide."

Canada was Minnesota's strongest national market, with sales climbing 5 percent to \$1.55 billion. Other top 10 national markets were Mexico at \$640 million, up 57 percent, China at \$555 million, down 6 percent, Japan at \$306 million, up 14 percent, Belgium at \$184 million, up 6 percent, South Korea at \$171 million, up 9 percent, Germany

at \$168 million, down 2 percent, the Philippines at \$157 million, down 1 percent, Singapore at \$144 million, up 10 percent and the United Kingdom at \$127 million, up 3 percent.

Mexico had the largest gain among all countries, with exports climbing \$233 million because of strong sales growth in agricultural goods, machinery, electrical machinery and vehicles.

The state's top export category was optic, medical and other products, up 16 percent to \$938 million. Increased sales to Japan were up 37 percent, China at 20 percent and Belgium at 18 percent drove much of the growth in that category. The strongest product sales in that category were for medical and surgical instruments and optic fiber.

Other top export categories were machinery at \$860 million, down 11 percent, electrical machinery at \$713 million, up 11 percent, vehicles at \$540 million, down 8 percent, plastic at \$314 million, up 25 percent, food byproducts at \$162 million, up 1 percent, aircraft, spacecraft at \$135 million, up 19 percent, ores, slag, ash at \$135 million, up 152 percent, cereals at \$118 million, up 63 percent and mineral fuel, oil at \$95 million, up 150 percent.

The big jumps in ores, slag and ash at 152 percent and mineral fuel, oil at 150 percent were driven by sales increases in Canada.



Katie Clark Sieben

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