

Here's to a Happy and Safe 2012!

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In the news recently, there have been stories about valley residents victimized by winter weather and conditions while traveling in Northern Arizona. Lauren Weinberg, a 23 year old Arizona State University student, was trapped in her vehicle for 10 days near the Mogollon Rim before being found alive. Weinberg was ill prepared and had to live off of 2 candy bars and melted snow. When planning a trip up to the snow country it is only natural to dream of the amazing time we hope to have and overlook the possible dangers that await us. With temperatures in the upper 70s in the valley, being trapped in freezing temperatures doesn't cross our mind and life-saving items are often ignored when packing our belongings. Here are some simple safety tips when traveling during the winter months:

- Before leaving:
 - Have a mechanic perform a "trip check" on your vehicle to inspect your brakes, battery, hoses, fluid levels and tires.
 - Check your windshield wipers. If they streak, you need new ones.
 - Make sure your heater and defroster are properly working
 - Ensure all headlights and lamps are working efficiently
 - Check to make sure that not only does your radio work but that you can receive all AM/FM stations. One of your preset radio stations should be a station that is dedicated to weather/traffic reports for the area you are heading to.
 - Make sure someone knows exactly when you are going and when to expect you home
- Have enough supplies to last at least 72 hours in case of an emergency. Pack extra water, snacks, hats, socks, gloves, batteries, medications, blankets, flashlights, and matches. Consider specialty items that other family members or pets may need like prescription meds, diapers, baby formula or dog food.
- In your vehicle there should also be a shovel, windshield scraper, small broom, snow chains, tow rope, flares, jumper cables, first aid kit, pocket knife and battery powered radio.
- While traveling:
 - Keep your gas tank at least half full at all times
 - Always carry your cell phone and car charger
 - Never use cruise control in snow conditions
 - Increase following distance
 - Avoid abrupt stops and starts

- Use extreme caution when traveling on roads that look wet, they may actually be frozen.
- Turn your low beam headlights in bad weather and whenever using your wipers
- If you become trapped, NEVER leave your vehicle. Make sure your exhaust pipe is clear, crack the downwind window and start your engine every 1-2 hours
- If you do not absolutely have to travel in bad weather...DONT!

Preparation is the most important aspect to surviving any emergency, especially when trapped in freezing cold temperatures. Hopefully you will never be in a situation where you will need to rely on an emergency kit and survival skills but if you do, you will be ready.

HERES TO A SAFE AND HAPPY 2012!!!