



Holiday Safety During the COVID -19 Pandemic

All of the experts agree COVID-19 has changed the way that we need to participate in social activities. These changes will be particularly challenging during the holiday season when many social activities will need to be changed or curtailed this year. Through the course of the pandemic we have learned that infected asymptomatic employees unknowingly bring the virus into our workplace. Employers should encourage employees to celebrate the holidays safely and prudently.

Celebrating virtually or with members of your own household poses low risk for spread of the virus. In-person gatherings, however, bring varying levels of risk. There are several factors that contribute to the risk of getting infected or infecting others with the virus that causes COVID-19 at a holiday celebration. In combination, these factors will create various amounts of risk, so it is important to consider them individually and together:

- * **Community levels of COVID-19** – Higher levels of COVID-19 cases and community spread in the gathering location, as well as where attendees are coming from, increases the risk of infection and spread among attendees. Family and friends should consider the number and rate of COVID-19 cases when considering whether to host or attend a holiday celebration. Information on the number of cases in an area can be found on the area’s health department website.
- * **The locations attendees are traveling from** – Gatherings with attendees who are traveling from different places pose a higher risk than gatherings with attendees who live in the same area.
- * **The location of the gathering** – Indoor gatherings generally pose more risk than outdoor gatherings. Indoor gatherings with poor ventilation pose more risk than those with good ventilation, such as those with open windows or doors.
- * **The number of people at the gathering** – Gatherings with more people pose more risk than gatherings with fewer people. The size of a holiday gathering should be determined based on the ability to reduce or limit contact between attendees, the risk of spread between attendees, and state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends the following:

- * At risk populations including the elderly or anyone with an underlying medical condition should refrain from social gatherings where masks and social distancing are not possible.
- * Small social gatherings, inside, are now known to be particularly dangerous with the regard to the spread of COVID-19 as people do not typically wear a mask or social distance.
- * If the weather is mild consider outside activities with small groups and appropriate social distancing and face masks.
- * When celebrating with those from outside the immediate family remember to use social distancing and face masks – indoors and outdoors.
- * Always stay at least 6 feet away from people that do not live with you.
- * If you must gather inside, open windows and/or doors to allow air to flow, if possible
- * Encourage guests to bring their own food and drinks. Do not share utensils and drinking cups.
- * Work celebrations with large numbers of employees gathered together are not advisable.
- * The holidays are a stressful time of the year remember to take care of mental health.



Winter Driving Tips for Both Organization and Personal Vehicle Use

Are Your Vehicles Ready for the Cold?

Ensure that all cars are serviced

Check for recalls: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/recalls>

- * Know the vehicle - every vehicle handles differently especially when driving on wet, icy or snowy roads. Practice driving on snow or icy covered roads but not on a main road!
- * Stock the vehicle - with items to handle common winter driving related tasks such as cleaning the windshield as well as emergency supplies
- * Plan your travel and route-check the weather, road conditions and traffic. Don't rush, build in plenty of time.
- * Check battery - cold temperature weakens battery
- * See and be seen! Check headlights, brake lights, turn signals, emergency flashers and interior lights. If towing something, check the trailer brake lights and turn signals.
- * Cooling system-make sure it is working properly
- * Fill the washer reservoir before the first snow hits
- * Check windshield wipers and defrosters
- * Floor mats - improperly installed floor mats may interfere with the operation of the accelerator or brake pedal, increasing the risk of a crash
- * Tires-if you use snow tires install them in the fall. www.nhtsa.gov/tires provides information on tire ratings and look for the snowflake symbol. Inspect tires at least monthly and also the spare tire. Colder air impacts tire inflation so ensure each tire is filled to the vehicle specs.
- * Stay alert - keep your gas tank close to full, avoid driving if road conditions are hazardous.
- * Avoid risky driving behaviors-do not text or engage in any activities that may distract while driving. Obey all posted speed limits but drive even slower in adverse weather.

Driving In Winter Conditions

- * Drive slowly. It's harder to control or stop your vehicle on a slick or snow-covered surface. Increase your following distance enough so that you'll have plenty of time to stop for vehicles ahead of you.
- * Know whether your vehicle has an antilock brake system and learn how to use it properly. Antilock brake systems prevent your wheels from locking up during braking. If you have antilock brakes, apply firm, continuous pressure to the brake pedal. If you don't have antilock brakes, you may need to pump your brakes if you feel your wheels starting to lock up.

Navigating Around Snow Plows

- * Don't crowd a snow plow or travel beside it. Snow plows travel slowly, make wide turns, stop often, overlap lanes, and exit the road frequently.
- * The road behind an active snow plow is safer to drive on. If you find yourself behind a snow plow, stay there but don't follow or stop too closely. A snow plow operator's field-of-vision is limited; if you can't see the mirrors, the driver can't see you. Also, materials used to de-ice the road could hit your vehicle.
- * Snow plows can throw up a cloud of snow that can reduce your visibility to zero in less time than you can react. Never drive into a snow cloud – it can conceal vehicles or hazards.

If You are Stopped or Stalled in Wintry Weather

- * Stay with your car and don't overexert yourself.
- * Put bright markers on the antenna or windows and keep the interior dome light turned on.
- * To avoid asphyxiation from carbon monoxide poisoning, don't run your car for long periods of time with the windows up or in an enclosed space. If you must run your vehicle, clear the exhaust pipe of any snow and run it only sporadically — just long enough to stay warm.