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SAFE DRIVING TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON AND WINTER WEATHER

SACRAMENTO, CA – Winter is just around the corner but the change in the weather has already brought low temperatures, rain, and even some snow to California. Every year families travel for Thanksgiving get-togethers, with the inevitable increase in traffic. Big sales on “Black Friday” add to the congestion and frustrations on our roadways. The California Office of Traffic Safety reminds motorists of the importance of being extra alert and courteous so that everyone can arrive at their destination and enjoy the Thanksgiving holiday with their friends and loved ones.

“The holiday season is a time when we see the most people on the roads,” said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. “With the changing weather, take extra caution and make sure your car is ready for any road condition.”

A recent study by the National Safety Council ranks Thanksgiving as the deadliest holiday period of the year, averaging 506 deaths nationally per year for the past two decades. To help everyone stay safe this Thanksgiving and throughout the winter months, OTS recommends the following tips:

- Make sure your brakes, windshield wipers, defroster, anti-freeze, heater and lights are in top condition. Make sure your tires, including the spare, are properly inflated and the treads are in good condition.
- Visit www.storms.ca.gov ahead of any expected heavy storm during this season. Get the latest weather report for the whole trip and check quickmap.dot.ca.gov for current road conditions.
- Buckle seat belts, everybody, every trip. Wearing a seat belt is the best defense to prevent injury and death in a crash. That includes buckling children into properly installed child safety or booster seats.
- Remain alert. Constantly scan the road for brake lights in front of you.
- Part of being alert is minimizing distractions, like turning off or silencing your cell phone.
- If it's raining hard, keep your vehicle in the middle lane, since water tends to pool in outside lanes.

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- Turn on your headlights in rainy, foggy or overcast conditions. Use low beams in fog or snow.
- Do not use cruise control during wet or snowy road conditions. Cruise control can cause skidding and loss of tire traction in winter conditions.
- In rain or snow, first slow down, then increase the following distance between you and the car in front. Stopping distances can double in rain and triple in snow.
- Never drive through running water that could be deeper than the bottom of your vehicle.
- In the event you find yourself hydroplaning or skidding, remember the following:
 - Do not brake or turn suddenly. Take your foot off the gas until you slow enough to feel traction on the road again.
 - Turn your steering wheel in the direction of the skid and as you recover control, gently straighten the wheels.
 - If you need to brake, do so with light pumping action. If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes, then brake normally, because the vehicle's computer will mimic a pumping action.
- Carry an emergency kit in your trunk for safety, comfort and possible repairs. For suggestions, visit www.ots.ca.gov/roadsideemergencykit.asp.
- Finally, don't drive when you are tired or under the influence of alcohol or drugs whether they be illicit or prescription. If you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, always designate a sober driver.

By following these tips, everyone can enjoy a safe and happy Thanksgiving. Join us on Twitter at @OTS_CA or "Like" us at www.facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS and keep up with the latest traffic safety information. For more winter driving tips, visit www.OTS.ca.gov/OTS_and_Traffic_Safety/Traffic_Safety_Tips/winter_driving_tips.asp

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