# Winter Driving & Holiday Shopping Tips

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Essex County Sheriff Armando Fontoura has issued an alert to motorists, advising them to have their vehicles properly serviced and maintained for the winter months and to drive cautiously during the holiday season.

“It’s the season for snowstorms and icy roads,” Fontoura stated, “so it is imperative to make the necessary upgrades on all vehicles to reduce the dangers of winter driving. Tires, lights, batteries, anti-freeze and all engine fluid levels should be thoroughly inspected and serviced.”

Sheriff Fontoura also advised motorists to observe posted speed limits, to obey traffic pattern warning indicators and to not drink and drive. “Recommended speed limits apply when road conditions are ideal. To avoid skidding, hydroplaning and to prevent accidents, I urge motorists to slow down when streets are wet or icy, or when visibility is poor. Many motorists fail to recognize that driving can be particularly dangerous at this time of the year.”

In New Jersey, a person is guilty of drunk driving if his or her Blood Alcohol Concentration is 0.08 percent or greater. “Law enforcement has zero tolerance for driving under the influence of alcohol,” Fontoura noted. “The penalties for drunk driving are severe and include fines, jail time, mandatory in-patient alcohol education classes and the loss of one’s driver’s license.”

Since weather forecasters predict a colder and snowier winter for the Atlantic Corridor states, from Virginia to Massachusetts, the sheriff also recommended that all vehicles be equipped with emergency gear, including blankets, flashlights or flares, a first aid kit, chains, jumper cables, a box of rock salt and a shovel.

“If you breakdown on the road you must have the protective clothing to keep yourself and your children warm and the necessary equipment to get your car going again,” Fontoura said. “A little common sense and planning now could prevent a dangerous or life-threatening situation later.”

The sheriff also advised holiday shoppers to always park in well-lit areas and to always check the back seat before entering the car. “Shoppers should be aware of their surroundings. Never park in dimly lit or isolated areas. Purchases should be stored in your trunk and never left exposed on the back seat.”

To prevent a carjacking situation, Sheriff Fontoura urged motorists to always leave sufficient maneuvering room between your car and the car stopped in front of you. “Always leave an avenue of escape when stopped for traffic lights,” he said. “It is also very important to keep car doors and windows locked at all times. If your car is bumped into and the circumstances are suspicious, or if you feel that you are being followed, immediately drive to the nearest police station.”