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## Stalled but Safe

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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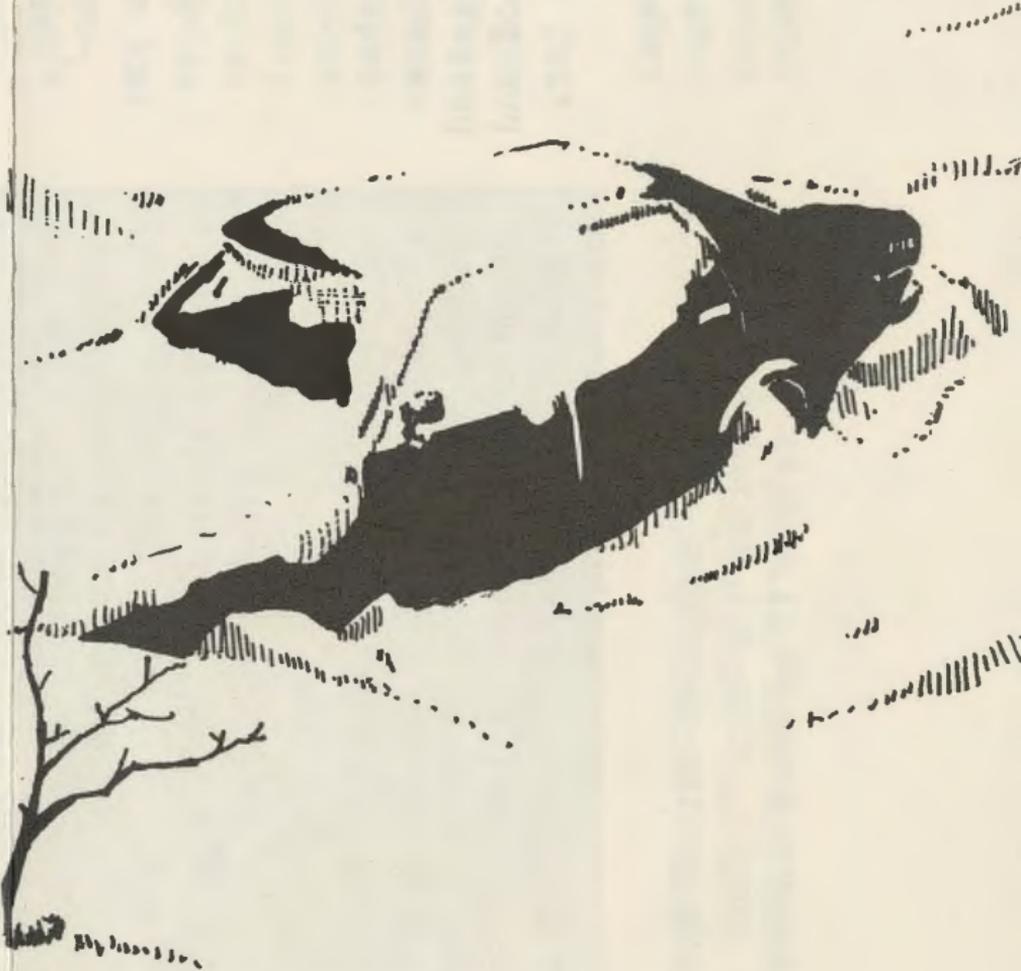
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# Stalled but Safe



Cooperative Extension Service  
South Dakota State University  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

# Stalled but Safe

One advantage of living in this part of the country is that we can enjoy four different seasons. But in winter that enjoyment can quickly turn to panic and disaster, if you travel without being prepared for snow, cold--and a stalled car.

Car trouble doesn't just happen to people on trips. It can happen just as easily a mile from home. You can't tell how long you'll be in a ditch or a snowbank this winter, and you can't survive an extended length of time out there without the proper clothes and supplies which you should have stored in your trunk during the fall.

## So that it isn't the car's fault . . .

If you're stranded this winter, don't let it be because your car broke down. Go over this checklist and winterize your car before the storm season hits.

- \_\_\_\_\_ ignition system
- \_\_\_\_\_ battery
- \_\_\_\_\_ lights
- \_\_\_\_\_ heater and defroster
- \_\_\_\_\_ wiper blades
- \_\_\_\_\_ cooling system and antifreeze
- \_\_\_\_\_ fuel system
- \_\_\_\_\_ exhaust system free from leaks
- \_\_\_\_\_ winter grade oil and lubrication
- \_\_\_\_\_ brakes properly adjusted
- \_\_\_\_\_ tire tread
- \_\_\_\_\_ snow tires installed
- \_\_\_\_\_ chains

Keep your gas tank at least half full. This will help reduce condensation in the tank and provide a margin of safety to get where you're going or to keep you warm when you're waiting for help.

## Plan every trip

Whenever you take the car out in winter, take the following precautions.

Get the latest local weather and road reports. Check your nearest law enforcement office or radio or TV station.

If they say blizzard warnings are in effect, it means that winds with speeds of at least 35 mph are accompanied by considerable falling or blowing snow, and temperatures of 20° F or lower will prevail for an extended period of time.

Severe blizzard warnings are issued when blizzards of extreme proportions are expected. Winds will be at least 45 mph, there will be much falling or blowing snow, and temperatures will be 10° F or lower.

Tell people your plans.

Dress according to the weather conditions.

Fill the tank and check your car.

Carry this fact sheet and suggested supplies in your car.

## Car equipment

Keep these items stored in your trunk: a good spare tire, tire chains and tools; a shovel and supply of sand, a tow rope or chain, small tools (pliers, screwdriver, adjustable wrench, hatchet, pocket knife), and booster cables.

You'll also need: flares, flashers, flashlight and batteries, deicers for gasoline and windshield, windshield scraper, sunglasses, and a bright red or orange cloth.

## Heaters

Regardless of the type of heating you have in your car you must crack the window for ventilation and removal of excess moisture. This is especially im-

portant if you are idling the engine. You cannot smell carbon monoxide, and the fumes are poisonous.

There are a variety of emergency heating devices, from a simple candle to a radiant heater. You can make your own heater by rolling up corrugated cardboard and sticking it in an old tuna fish can, then pouring melted paraffin over it. There are also some "multi-wick candles" on the market which are said to keep the car interior comfortable for 24 hours when all of the wicks are lit at the same time.

Or you can purchase a small stove which uses canned heat. Buy extra cans, as one lasts about an hour with continuous use. Another heater is a propane gas cylinder which is said to provide 12,000 btu's of heat per hour for 24 hours with its two fuel cylinders. Spare cylinders would be a wise investment. Catalytic heaters are available, and there are other kinds in the catalogs and sports stores. A gas lantern will provide both light and some supplemental heat.

Remember to ventilate, and to follow directions for use. Carry a small fire extinguisher.



*If you carry nothing else in the trunk, these items are absolutely essential. Add items for your own personal safety.*

When the heat runs out, add layers of clothing, and wrap in a blanket or sleeping bag. Curl up; this conserves heat better than if you're stretched out. Huddle together if there are two or more of you.

Seat covers and floor mats will help keep you warm in an emergency. Also wrapping newspapers around your body will help conserve heat.

### Bedding and clothing

Several layers of thin clothing will keep you warmer than one heavy layer, for dead air is trapped between the layers and among the fibers. Use a vapor barrier (a raincoat or other water repellent fabric) as your outer layer if you are out in the snow or sleet.

Wet clothes are not warm clothes. Don't wear the water repellent layer inside the car if it makes you perspire.

To keep warmest, cover your head, neck, hands, and feet, as well as your body. The more skin surface is exposed, the faster the heat drains from the body. Hands and feet cool the quickest and need special care. Mittens are warmer than gloves. If feet perspire, change socks periodically if possible, letting the spare pair dry out.

Have a kit for each person in your family. Children also may have special needs, such as diapers.

Much of this equipment you already have on hand. Consider thermal or knit underwear, wool slacks or sweat pants, sweater or sweat shirt, snowmobile suit, parka or insulated coverall, hood or cap with earflaps, scarf, mittens, heavy socks and boots, sunglasses and a face mask, blankets, and a sleeping bag.

In selecting outdoor wear and sleeping bags, read the labels carefully to see what you're getting. Many items, especially sleeping bags, list minimum temperatures. Price is sometimes an

indication of quality, with the heavier polyesters costing more than the lightweight polyesters or blends. A 5 oz. filling is warmer than a 3 oz. Look for non-allergenic, odorless, water repellent, and mat resisting properties. Goose-down filled clothes are excellent as they are warm and also "breathe."

The old-fashioned rubber galoshes are not stylish, but then, who's going to see you? They can keep your feet from getting wet just as effectively as more expensive boots. Snowmobile boots have the added feature of felt liners which insulate your feet. The warmer your feet, the better you feel.

Two-layer mittens are preferred. Wool linings and outer layers of leather or water repellent fabric are best. Buckskin chopper mitts with wool liners are an example.

And then, there are the novelty items--socks and cushions that reflect heat back to the body, battery socks and mittens. Don't pass up the more standard equipment for these alone--your batteries may be dead!

Sources for outdoor clothing and bedding include sports shops, catalogs, discount stores, and Army-Navy stores.

## Food

You want high-energy foods that take up a minimum of space, can be stored for a long time, and don't require a double boiler or meat thermometer to prepare. This is one time you can eat a candy bar without feeling guilty.

Dried fruits are good, as are crackers and nuts. Check a store that has camping supplies--many of the back-packing foods are excellent in a stalled car. To prevent freezing, keep food and water in the passenger area of the car.

Don't drink alcoholic beverages. Besides accelerating body heat loss, alcohol might impair your judgment. Smoking also hastens body heat loss.

## Medical supplies

Along with your first aid kit, include the medications you and your passengers use, and a covered container for toilet use.

## Entertainment supplies

Carry your favorite type of reading, a deck of cards, and other games. Now you have time to write a letter and listen to your transistor radio, even if your car battery's dead. Add a travel clock to be used as an alarm.



*Keeping warm will be your first priority. Many kinds of heaters are available.*

## If you're caught in a storm . . .

Stay with the car. Your chances are much, much better if you do. Expect to spend up to several days in the car. So be organized, take time to consider each step carefully, and use your resources up gradually.

Position the car so it faces into the wind, if possible. The car will be warmest when headed in this direction. Be sure the exhaust is free of snow, and check it periodically. Tie the banner on your radio antenna.

Get your supplies out of the trunk and arranged in the car. Loosen tight clothing so you'll be more comfortable.

Ration your gas. Idle the engine for 15 minutes every half hour to get the greatest amount of warmth from each gallon of gas. Open the downwind window slightly for ventilation.

Prepare to send up flares or to flash the car lights when the radio reports that road crews are in your vicinity.

Now relax and read your favorite book. It's been some time since you've been able to indulge yourself this way.

## If a blizzard traps you, don't panic

Avoid overexertion and exposure. Overexertion from attempting to push your car, shoveling heavy drifts, and performing other difficult chores during the strong winds, blinding snow, and bitter cold of a blizzard may cause a heart attack, even for persons in apparently good physical condition.

Stay in your vehicle. Do not attempt to walk out of a blizzard. You'll be quickly disoriented. Being lost in an open country during a blizzard is almost certain death. You are more likely to be found, and you are also sheltered, in your car.

Keep fresh air in your car. Freezing wet or wind-driven snow can completely seal the passenger compartment, cutting off your supply of oxygen. Beware of the gentle killers carbon monoxide and oxygen starvation.

Exercise and relieve tension by clapping hands and moving around vigorously from time to time. Don't stay in one position for very long. Moving from between front and back seats is one good form of exercise.

Turn on dome light at night to make the vehicle visible to work crews.

Keep watch. Do not permit all occupants of the car to sleep at once. If you are stranded alone for a long time and sleep becomes a must, use the alarm to awaken yourself periodically.

Don't expect your CB alone to save you. You may be out of range of other operators or it may take time for them to find you. It can't keep you warm, and you can't eat it. Think twice before you ask somebody else to come out and get you--he may end up in a ditch, too, and you can pull yourself through if you've made the preparations outlined in this fact sheet.

*Material was adapted by G.R. Durland, Extension agricultural engineer, SDSU, from Circ. HE-341, Cooperative Extension Service, NDSU.*

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