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Spring driving can challenge even the best of drivers

Edmonton... Warm weather and longer daylight hours can make spring driving appear to be safer but the uncertainty of weather and road conditions can challenge even the best of drivers. Motorists may encounter overnight freezing temperatures, melting snow, black ice, rain, large puddles, potholes, gravel, sand, fog and even the occasional blizzard in the spring.

Being prepared is the key to safe driving. The most important thing drivers can do is to drive at a speed that matches the existing visibility, traffic and road conditions. By simply reducing their speed, drivers can increase the time they have to react in an emergency.

White-out still a risk

- Spring blizzards can include large snowfall in a short period of time, slippery surfaces, freezing rain and poor visibility.
- Keep a shovel, snow brush, spare jacket, boots and mitts in the vehicle.

Wet weather skills

- Always turn on headlights as rapid changes in spring temperatures can quickly form misty, foggy conditions that can limit visibility.
- If the vehicle starts to hydroplane (tires riding on a film of water), or if it becomes foggy, reduce speed, don't brake or turn.
- Tires should be properly inflated to decrease the risk of hydroplaning.
- Use low beams only, as high beams will reflect off the moisture in the air and throw light back into your eyes. Use fog lights if the vehicle has them.
- Keep windows clear and carry extra windshield washer fluid.
- Slow down! It's difficult to judge whether a puddle is one centimetre deep or 18 centimetres.
- If you can't see, pull as far off the road as you safely can and use the vehicle's hazard lights to warn other drivers of your presence.

Potholes, sand, gravel... and the washboard effect

- Watch for potholes and take extra care when encountering one.
- Keep tires properly inflated and have the vehicle's wheel alignment checked regularly because potholes can damage tires, suspension and alignment, which can become a costly repair.
- Reduce speed on roads with an accumulation of sand and gravel. Sand and gravel can delay stopping and steering ability, cause glass and paint chips, and create dust that decreases visibility.
- Watch out for ripples in the road -- commonly known as washboards -- when travelling on gravel and oil-based roads. Keep a firm grasp on the steering wheel and slow down by gradually letting your foot off the gas pedal.

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