

# What happens if my vehicle is disabled in the winter?

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Every year people die in rural areas when their vehicle becomes disabled in the winter and they unsuccessfully try to walk to safety... they are later found frozen to death! In a nutshell, these deaths can be virtually eliminated with one rule – “STAY WITH YOUR VEHICLE”. Below are some important tips that can save your life.

## How a vehicle becomes disabled:

- Collision with another vehicle or object
- Drive into the ditch, loss of control (the motor may still work but you are stuck)
- Mechanical breakdown
- Run out of gas (shame on you, always fill the tank when leaving a populated area in winter)

## Why should you stay with your vehicle?

People usually die because of several incorrect assumptions, they think:

- Safety is closer than it actually is
- They can walk farther than they are able to

**RESULT** – They become stranded in the middle of nowhere in the cold

- They can't survive long in their cold vehicle
- They won't be found for a long time

**ACTUALITY** – Generally they can easily survive long enough to be found by another driver

## Always prepare for the reasonable worst-case scenario!

This means: 1) put a survival kit in your car; and 2) plan to stay with your vehicle if it becomes disabled in winter. A survival kit ideally should include 2 sleeping bags and 2 sets of winter clothing. 2 people can keep really warm; 4 people can get either clothing or a sleeping bag). Your kit can be made up from winter clothing you don't use any more.

Parka(s)	Heavy pants	Snow boots	Tow rope	Sleeping bag(s)
Sweater(s)	Heavy long johns	Mitts	Shovel	Candles/matches
Toque/warm hat	Heavy socks	Signal flares		Chocolate bars

## Plan of action:

- Stay with vehicle, put on clothing (get in sleeping bag), prepare flares to signal distant vehicles.
- You may light a candle in the dark, open a window a little as fire uses oxygen.
- If engine is functional, you may run it intermittently to warm the vehicle and then turn it off (ex. 5-10 minutes every hour). Open window to prevent carbon monoxide buildup. If the candle goes out, **warning** – carbon monoxide level may be rising, turn off engine.

You can survive a long time in cold vehicle (even at -40°C with no survival kit). You may get really cold, but you will not freeze to death. Another vehicle will be along sooner than you would think.