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Christmas Travel Safety

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The holidays are almost here and you know what that means - the kickoff to holiday travel season is about to begin. Nearly 63.9 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home during the Christmas holiday travel period. More than 52.4 million Americans (82 percent of all holiday travelers) intend to travel by automobile. Lets take a look at some road safety tips for the Christmas and New Years holidays:

- Make sure that your car is well-equipped for travel. Check the tire tread, battery, antifreeze, windows and brakes. Also check that you have a jack and lug wrench and that your spare tire is properly inflated.
- Allow extra time in your schedule. This is one of the busiest times to travel and patience and flexibility is needed.
- Have a cell phone with you.
- Avoid driving during late night hours. There is an increased incidence of drunk driving during this time, especially on weekends.
- Keep a safety kit in your vehicle. The kit should include a flashlight with extra batteries, jumper cables, first aid kit, water, non-perishable food items, matches, blankets, and flares or other warning devices. You should also include an ice scraper, small shovel and a bag of sand or kitty litter in case you get stuck in the snow.

- Driving while drowsy can be as dangerous as driving after drinking alcohol. Schedule your trip to avoid driving during normal sleep hours. Plan for at least a 15-minute rest stop every two hours. Limit driving to 350 miles per day or no more than eight hours on the road to avoid drowsy driving.

- Even if the weather and roads look okay in your neighborhood, that may not be the case 200 miles away at Grandma's house. You will also want to check The Weather Channel to find out the weather conditions of the interstates and roads you will be traveling on.

- Wear a seat belt. In 2006 alone, seat belts saved an estimated 15,415 lives, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.

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