

You can slide out of winter driving hazards

Winter in Michigan has its advantages: there's plenty of good skiing and ice skating, and all the mosquitoes die. But driving in snow, ice, and slush isn't one of the good parts of living in a winter wonderland. How many people have you heard say, "I have never been so scared in my life," after a winter driving experience?

To help motorists drive a little more confidently when Old Man Winter hits, automaker Saab has offered a few tips:

- Clear the windows! Motorists sometimes drive around in veritable rolling igloos with no more than a peep hole in the windshield. If scraping ice from the glass isn't sufficient, wait for the car to fully warm up and keep the defroster on.

- A seemingly clear and dry road may also have a treacherous covering of black ice, which forms as a clear, thin layer that's difficult to see. Bridges and overpasses are especially susceptible to black ice. One way to avoid problems is to always drive at a speed slightly below that which you are certain you can handle your car safely.

- Avoid sudden maneuvers while driving under slippery conditions. Sudden acceleration may cause wheel spin, and the increase in road speed will be negligible. Regardless of the steering efforts of the driver, a front-wheel drive car will tend to go straight ahead.

- Sudden braking and locking of the wheels will have about the same effect as wheel spin. The locked wheels will lose all lateral stabilizing effect, the car will not respond to the steering and it will skid, possibly sideways.

- Skidding is best avoided by slowing down before a bend and taking the curve at steady throttle. Skidding is usually caused by the speed of the car being too high. If your speed is too high, don't panic; don't brake heavily and don't jerk the steering wheel.

- For a rear-wheel skid, Saab suggests steering in the same direction as the rear wheels are skidding; this applies to either a front-wheel or rear-wheel drive car. In a skid, take your foot off the accelerator and depress the clutch, if so equipped. Wait until the rear wheels have stopped skidding and then steer the car gently back, so that the front wheels point straight ahead when the rear wheels are back on course. Release the clutch and depress the accelerator gently so the engine speed matches the road speed, and accelerate gently. On rear-wheel drive cars, be careful not to over-correct the first skid.

- A front wheel-drive skid is less common and easier to

correct than a rear-wheel drive skid. Saab suggests that you don't move the steering wheel. Take your foot off the accelerator and depress the clutch pedal, if so equipped. Since the wheels are skidding sideways, they exert a certain braking effort. Wait for the front wheels to grip again. As soon as the speed has dropped off

enough, the car will start to steer again. Release the clutch and accelerate gently. Don't lock the wheels when braking. When a wheel is heavily braked, heat will be generated by the friction between the tire and the road surface. The surface of the ice will then melt immediately under the tire, which becomes a

lubricating surface of water. Hydroplaning takes place when water causes a car's tires to lose contact with the road surface. A wedge of water forms in front of the tire because the water is not being expelled towards the rear and to the sides of the tread. The car becomes completely uncontrollable. The weapons against hydroplaning

are primarily good tires, proper tire pressure and low speeds. The wider the tire, the greater the risk of hydroplaning. However competent a driver you are, getting stuck in the snow is not uncommon. The most important thing to remember is, never spin the driving wheels. Spinning the tires creates a polished surface

underneath, and you may become firmly stuck. If you get in such a rut, switch off the fan, radio, windshield wipers, and other distractions, open the window and listen to the engine speed. Use any grip the car may have to struggle forward or backward. Change between forward and reverse and rock the car out.

Applause... Applause.

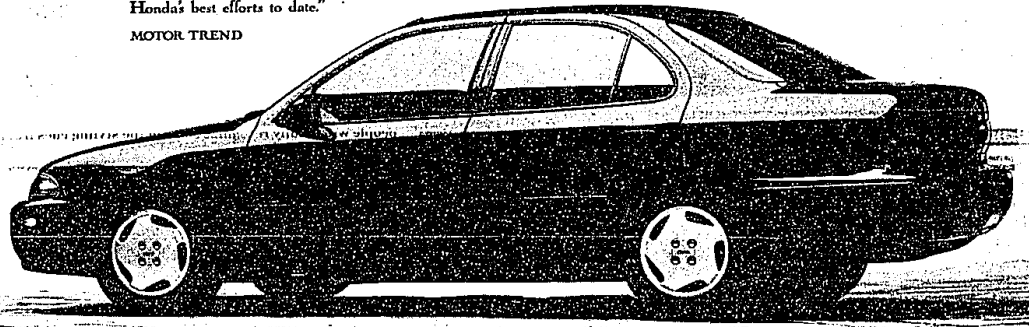
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Big 3 execs share stage at economic club lunch

The chief executive officers of the Big Three auto companies will be guest speakers at the Economic Club of Detroit during the 1993 North American International Auto Show's press days.

It will be the first time the CEOs of Chrysler Corp., Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corp. will appear together in a public forum.

The speakers offer a mix of the incoming and the outgoing. Robert Eaton will have been chairman and chief executive officer of Chrysler for only a week when he appears at the Economic Club. Formerly vice chairman of Chrysler, Eaton succeeds Lee Iacocca.

GM President John F. "Jack" Smith, Jr. assumed his role in November. Ford Chairman Harold "Red" Poling will retire in 1993.

The luncheon will be held on Friday, Jan. 8, the day before the public opening of the auto show at Cobo Center.

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