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NDDOT encourages motorists to stay up to date on road conditions this holiday season

The North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) encourages motorists to put safety first when traveling this holiday season and to use one of the many tools NDDOT provides to stay up to date on travel conditions such as the Travel Information Map, 511 and the NDRoads app for smartphones.

“Holidays are a busy travel time and NDDOT works hard to clear snow and ice from roadways to help you reach your destination safely,” says Mark Nelson, Deputy Director of the NDDOT. “Motorists must also do their part to reach their destination by buckling seat belts and driving sober.”

In 2013, there were 148 fatalities on North Dakota roads. Of these fatalities, 48 percent were alcohol-related and nearly 60 percent were not wearing their seat belt. Be a safe driver and make smart decisions this holiday season. Don't become a statistic.

Safe driving also includes ensuring your vehicle is in optimal condition before travelling.

To arrive at your destination safely, motorists should follow these winter driving tips:

- Never use cruise control on wet or icy roadways.
- Check your battery and inspect your tires.
- Turn on your lights and remove snow from the headlights and taillights.
- Dress according to weather conditions. Keep dry and wear clothing in layers.
- Do not leave without a full fuel tank.
- Use highly traveled roads and highways.
- Keep family or friends informed of your travel schedule and route.
- Travel with a charged cell phone, but don't rely on it to get you out of a bad situation.
- Carry a winter survival kit in your vehicle. The kit should include blankets, warm clothing, water, energy bars, a flashlight, a distress flag, a shovel and matches.
- Change travel plans as weather conditions warrant.

If you do get stranded:

- **Stay in your vehicle.**
- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes an hour to stay warm.
- When the engine is running, open a window slightly to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Periodically clearing snow from the exhaust pipe will also help prevent carbon monoxide buildup.
- When it's dark outside, turn on the interior light so rescuers can see you.
- Put up a distress flag, or spread a large colored cloth on the ground to attract attention from rescuers.

For more information about winter driving, view the Travel Information Map, or download the free NDRoads app, visit www.dot.nd.gov.