

HOKKAIDO WINTER LIVING GUIDE

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WINTER IN HOKKAIDO

Hokkaido is cooler and has less rainfall than the southern regions of Japan, with an average annual temperature of 5 to 10℃ and an average precipitation of 600 to 1,600 mm. In winter, in particular, there are no areas where the average daily temperature in the coldest month exceeds 0°C. From January to February, the Sea of Okhotsk is even covered with drift ice, making Hokkaido truly a “snowy, cold weather region.”

Source: “Hokkaido Data Book 2026”, Hokkaido Government

DURATION OF WINTER

Winter in Hokkaido is from December to February, but even in late autumn and early spring, temperatures can drop below freezing, and it can snow.

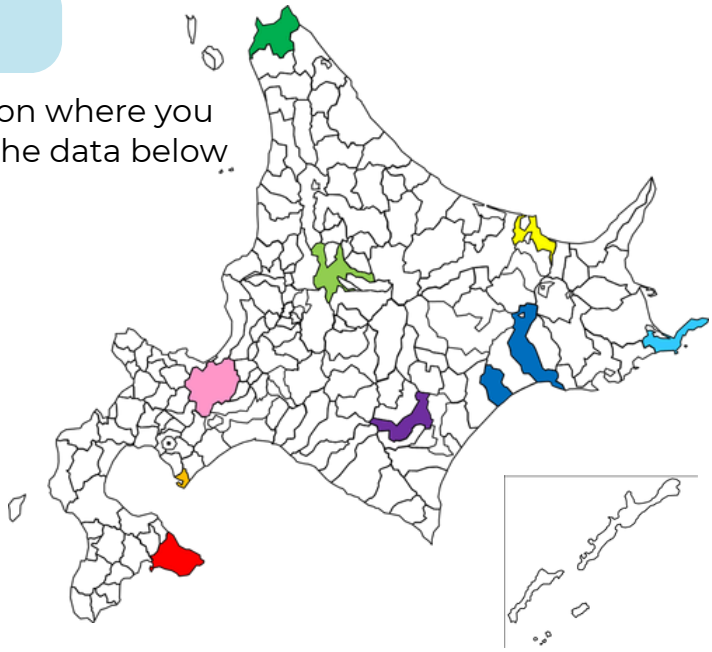


TEMPERATURE / SNOWFALL

Temperature and snowfall vary depending on where you live. For the major cities you can reference the data below

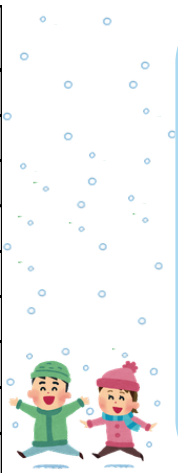
CITY	DEC		JAN		FEB	
Wakkanai	-4.2°C	0.0°C	-6.4°C	-2.4°C	-6.7°C	-2.0°C
Abashiri	-6.0°C	0.7°C	-8.9°C	-2.2°C	-9.6°C	-2.0°C
Asahikawa	-8.0°C	-0.8°C	-11.7°C	-3.3°C	-11.8°C	-1.7°C
Nemuro	-3.6°C	2.1°C	-6.5°C	-0.9°C	-7.1°C	-1.2°C
Kushiro	-7.0°C	2.5°C	-9.8°C	-0.2°C	-9.4°C	-0.1°C
Obihiro	-8.9°C	1.0°C	-13.0°C	-1.5°C	-12.0°C	-0.2°C
Sapporo	-4.0°C	2.0°C	-6.4°C	-0.4°C	-6.2°C	0.4°C
Muroran	-1.8°C	2.9°C	-4.0°C	0.6°C	-4.0°C	1.0°C
Hakodate	-3.6°C	3.2°C	-6.0°C	0.9°C	-5.7°C	1.8°C

Blue: Low Temperature **Red**: High Temperature



CITY	DEEPEST ACCUMULATION	ANNUAL SNOWFALL
Wakkanai	72 cm	477 cm
Abashiri	63 cm	312 cm
Asahikawa	89 cm	557 cm
Nemuro	34 cm	159 cm
Kushiro	34 cm	127 cm
Obihiro	71 cm	198 cm
Sapporo	97 cm	479 cm
Muroran	26 cm	157 cm
Hakodate	45 cm	306 cm

Based on statistics from the Japan Meteorological Agency (data from 1991 to 2020).



DID YOU KNOW?

The Japan Sea (western) side of Hokkaido has many cloudy and snowy days, and the amount of snowfall is high. Students there are often taught how to ski at school.



On the other hand, the Pacific (eastern) side has more sunny days and less snowfall, and the schools there often teach skating.



Even within the same Hokkaido, there are different climates!

Source: Japan Meteorological Agency



PREPARING FOR BLIZZARDS

WHAT IS A BLIZZARD?

ABOUT BLIZZARDS

WHAT IS A BLIZZARD?

A blizzard is a strong windstorm with snow.

The winds blow both the falling and the accumulated snow up into the air, leading to low visibility (whiteout) conditions.

Wind-driven snow can also accumulate in areas blocked by buildings, cars, and other structures, creating snowdrifts.

WHEN ARE BLIZZARDS LIKELY TO OCCUR?

Blizzards often occur during the passage of a well-developed low-pressure system or a strong winter pressure pattern. Viewed on a weather map, the isobars are tightly packed.

Another characteristic of blizzards is that wind strength and visibility can change rapidly when a low-pressure system is moving quickly, or in areas where the terrain is suddenly open.

Even on windy yet sunny days, you cannot let your guard down. Sunny weather can turn into a blizzard in an instant, so be careful of sudden changes in the weather.

TYPES OF DAMAGE CAUSED BY BLIZZARDS



SNOWDRIFTS

- Driving can become very dangerous, and your car may get stuck even if there is just 20 cm of accumulated snow.
- In homes, there is a risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if the air supply or exhaust vents of FF-type (kerosene) heaters, etc. are blocked. The front door may also get blocked by snow and become difficult to open.



DIFFICULTY WALKING DUE TO STRONG WINDS AND POOR VISIBILITY

- Strong winds can make it difficult to walk straight, and heavy snow can reduce visibility, causing you to lose your sense of direction and become lost.
- Additionally, poor visibility makes it difficult for drivers to see pedestrians, making walking along roads dangerous .



FLYING DEBRIS DUE TO STRONG WINDS

- Objects such as signs or roofs can be sent flying by strong winds.



POWER OUTAGES

- Snow buildup, strong winds, or flying debris may cut power lines causing power outages, which can leave you without lights or heating.
- The work to restore power may not be possible until the weather improves, resulting in prolonged power outages.

Source: “Are you ready? Preparing for Blizzards”, Hokkaido Government

PREPARING FOR BLIZZARDS

BLIZZARD RELATED DISASTERS IN HOKKAIDO

BLIZZARD RELATED DISASTERS IN HOKKAIDO (EXAMPLES)

In Hokkaido, blizzard related disasters occur regularly. Below are some examples of disasters that have occurred in Hokkaido in the past.

1~3 FEB 2001 **EMBETSU / TESHIO AREA**
Approximately 110 cars stranded, over 200 people evacuated

23~24 FEB 2008 **CHITOSE & NAGANUMA**
Approximately 300 cars stranded, 5 people injured

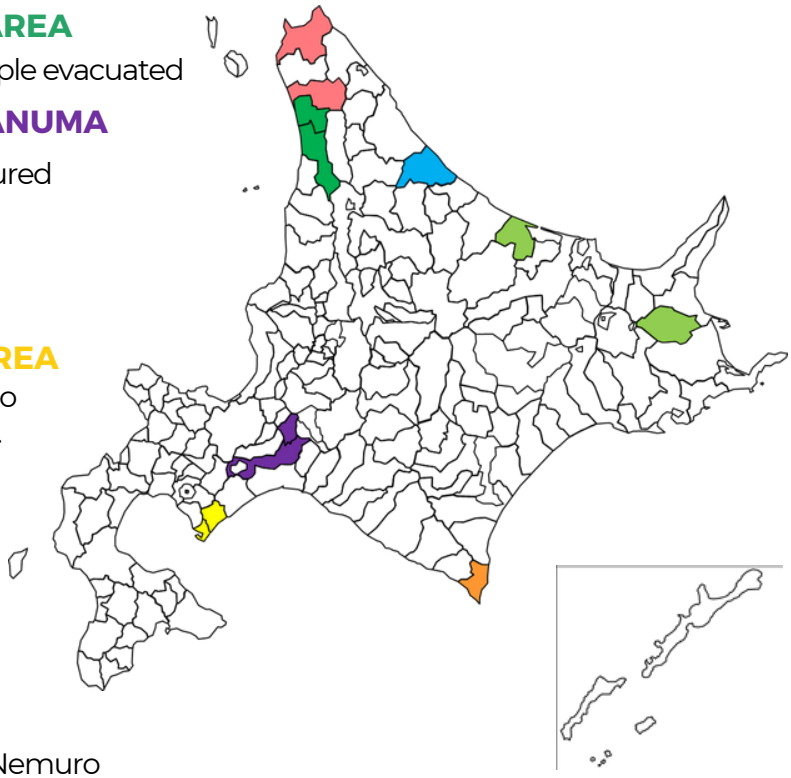
5~6 JAN 2011 **ERIMO**
43 cars stranded, over 100 people evacuated

26~27 NOV 2012 **MURORAN / NOBORIBETSU AREA**
Approximately 55,000 homes lost power due to the collapse of power transmission towers, etc.

15~16 FEB 2012 **WAKKANAI / HORONOBE AREA**
Approximately 150 cars stranded

21 FEB 2012 **OMU**
12-vehicle multiple collision accident, 3 injured

2~3 MAR 2013 **NAKASHIBETSU / YUBETSU AREA**
More than 500 cars stranded in the Abashiri / Nemuro region, 9 fatalities



Source: "Are you ready? Preparing for Blizzards", Hokkaido Government

BLIZZARD RELATED DISASTERS IN HOKKAIDO (VIDEOS)

To better understand the kind of disasters caused by blizzards, you can watch videos of actual footage from past disasters. Note that the videos include footage of traffic accidents at the moment of impact, etc., so please view at your own discretion.

STRANDED (SNOWDRIFTS)



www2.nhk.or.jp/archives/movies/?id=D0026010408_00000

News footage from the NHK Archives about the March 2-3, 2013, blizzard disaster in the towns of Nakashibetsu, Yubetsu, etc.

MULTIPLE COLLISION ACCIDENT



www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAkY20EQ1OM

This traffic safety education video (Actual Conditions of Traffic Accidents During Blizzards and Poor Visibility) was created by the Hokkaido Police and contains footage from the above blizzard disaster from 23-24 of February 2008 in Chitose City and Naganuma Town.



PREPARING FOR BLIZZARDS

ARE YOU READY?

TO AVOID DAMAGE FROM BLIZZARDS



- Damage caused by blizzards is especially common when clear weather suddenly takes a change for the worse.
- If you hear that bad weather is forecast on the TV or radio, don't lower your guard, even if the weather currently seems good, and be sure to check the latest weather and road information in advance.
- When a blizzard is forecast, avoid going out unnecessarily.

Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA)
www.jma.go.jp/jma/kokusai/multi.html

Hokkaido Disaster Prevention Portal
www.bousai-hokkaido.jp/

Safety tips (APP)
www.jnto.go.jp/safety-tips/eng/app.html

TAKE EXTREME CAUTION

Be extremely cautious if the Japan Meteorological Agency releases weather information using the phrases "A blizzard that occurs only once every few years" or "Please refrain from going out" !

PREPARE FOR BLIZZARDS ON A DAILY BASIS



TO STAY SAFE AT HOME...

- Pay attention to weather information, and avoid going out if a blizzard is forecast.
- If you are using an FF-type (kerosene) heater or similar equipment, make sure to prevent the air supply and exhaust vents from getting blocked by snow.
- Prepare the following items in your home in case there is a power outage or you are unable to leave your home for an extended period of time.



FLASHLIGHT



PORTABLE RADIO



COLD WEATHER GEAR



PORTABLE STOVE, FUEL

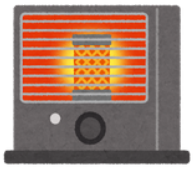


EMERGENCY FOOD, DRINKING WATER

IF YOU ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO DRIVE...

- Make sure you complete the preparations outlined on page 13 of this guide, in case your car becomes stranded due to sudden weather changes. Also, make sure you have enough fuel in the tank.
- If visibility becomes poor while driving due to wind and snow, stop and wait for the weather to improve at a nearby roadside station or convenience store
- Please check page 16 of this guide for information on what to do and what precautions to take if your car becomes stuck / stranded.

Source: "Are you ready? Preparing for Blizzards", Hokkaido Government



STAYING SAFE AT HOME

HOW TO SAFELY USE YOUR HEATER

Heaters are essential to life in Hokkaido, but incorrect use of gas and kerosene heaters can lead to accidents. Here are six points to keep you safe and warm this winter.

1 INSPECT BEFORE FIRST USE EACH SEASON



Has your gas or kerosene heater been collecting dust for the past 6 months? If you turn your heater on without performing the proper safety check, this could lead to a fire or an accident. Be sure to inspect and clean your heater thoroughly before using it for the first time this season.

2 CHECK HOW TO REFILL KEROSENE, ETC.



There are many different ways to refill gas and kerosene heaters, depending on the make and model. Always be sure to check the instruction manual. Also, keep an eye on your fuel levels throughout the winter so you don't get caught in a blizzard with an empty tank!

3 DON'T USE NEAR ANYTHING FLAMMABLE



Please be careful not to place anything flammable, such as curtains, bedding, etc., near the heater, as this may cause a fire. Also, please do not hang laundry around or on top of the heater, as laundry that has become lighter in weight after drying may fall onto the kerosene heater and cause a fire.

4 VENTILATE THE ROOM REGULARLY



Gas and kerosene heaters require venitilation to properly burn fuel and replenish the air (oxygen) used in combustion with fresh air from outside. Inadequate ventilation in the room can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning. Please regularly open windows, etc. to ventilate the room while using the heater.

5 INSPECT THE AIR SUPPLY / EXHAUST VENTS



If snow accumulates around your home, the air supply and exhaust vents connected to the outside may become blocked. Check the vents regularly and be sure to clear any snow that is blocking them.

6 TURN OFF BEFORE SLEEPING OR GOING OUT



Unforeseen accidents can occur when your heater is left unattended. In any situation where you can't properly monitor your heater, turn it off. Also, if you use an electric heater, be sure to remove the plug from the outlet to be extra safe.

This page was made using information from the Japan Industrial Association of Gas and Kerosene Appliances (JGKA) website. On the website, you can see information regarding the correct and safe usage of gas and kerosene equipment.

https://www.jgka.or.jp/gasusekiyu_riyou/index.html (Japanese language only)



STAYING SAFE AT HOME

HOW TO STAY WARM

There are many ways to warm up a room other than a heater. We will introduce simple insulation methods and tips that anyone can use to stay warm indoors during the winter months.

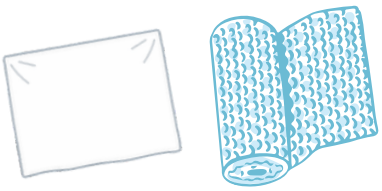
INSULATING THE WINDOWS



In the winter, heat from inside can escape through the windows. You can improve the insulation performance of your windows with just a few simple changes!

CHANGE TO THICK OR DOUBLE LAYER CURTAINS

This prevents heat from escaping through the window. You can also open the curtains when the sun is shining so that the sun's heat can warm up the room, and close them as soon as the sun goes down to keep the room warm.



ATTACH A HEAT INSULATING SHEET, ETC.

You can get insulating effects by affixing bubble-filled cushioning material or insulation sheets to the windows.

PLUG ANY GAPS OR CRACKS

Cold air can enter a room through gaps in windows and doors. You can prevent the outside air from coming in with products such as “gap tape” (*sukima* tape).



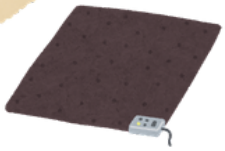
INSULATING THE FLOOR



If you have wood or any other kind of hard flooring, the floor can become cold in the winter.

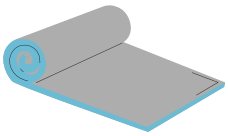
PUT DOWN A CARPET

Simply laying a carpet down can reduce heat loss through the floor, making the room warmer. Some people use electric heated carpets.



COMBINE THE CARPET WITH AN INSULATION MAT

If you lay an insulation mat underneath the carpet, it will be even warmer!



WARM CLOTHING

With just a few extra layers of clothing, you can raise your body temperature and feel warmer at home.

- If you wear a cardigan, sweater +2.2℃
- If you wear socks +0.6℃
- If you use a lap blanket +2.5℃



Also, warming areas with large blood vessels, such as the neck, wrists, and ankles, helps improve blood circulation and warm the whole body.

References: “Lifestyle tips to save on kerosene, etc. and get through winter”, Hokkaido Government
“A guide to saving energy and electricity in winter”, Sapporo City



STAYING SAFE AT HOME

HOW TO DRAIN PIPES

WHY DRAIN PIPES?

Hokkaido's winters are extremely cold, and water pipes may freeze if the outside temperature drops below -4℃. If your water pipes freeze, not only will you not have water, but you may also have to pay for repairs.

Draining pipes refers to the process of removing all the water from the pipes, and is an effective way to prevent the water from freezing and bursting the pipes.

Be especially careful when...

- the outside temperature falls below -4℃
- you will not use the water for a long period of time (such as overnight when you are sleeping, or when you are away from home on a trip)
- there are continuous days where the outside temperature is below freezing all day long (*mafuyubi*)



HOW TO DRAIN PIPES

The method of draining pipes differs depending on the type of residence (stand-alone house, apartment, condominium, etc.). Please refer to the videos created by the Sapporo City Waterworks Bureau explaining the process for each type.

【HOUSE】



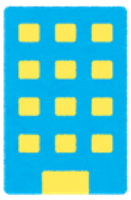
https://youtu.be/fUOge-_uCU8

【APARTMENT】



https://youtu.be/nm2hPzUIlyY

【CONDOMINIUM】



https://youtu.be/YtySrSuuxsY



These explanatory videos are merely examples. They do not apply to all residences, nor do they cover all methods. If you live in a rental property such as an apartment or condominium, check with your landlord or manager for details on how to drain the pipes in your particular home.

IF THE PIPES FREEZE



REPAIRING MINOR FREEZES:

Wrap a towel around the pipe or faucet and slowly pour hot water over it.

*Do not use boiling water. Also, pouring hot water directly onto pipes and faucets, or exposing them to an open flame to melt ice may cause the pipes to burst or cause a fire.



IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FIX THE PROBLEM YOURSELF:

Consult with a nearby designated water supply equipment construction company. If you don't know of any, you can check with your local municipal office.

*Costs for repairs, etc. must be borne by you. The amount will vary depending on the repair time and the materials used.

Reference: "Be cautious of water pipe freezing", Sapporo City Waterworks Bureau



SNOW REMOVAL ①

SNOW REMOVAL TOOLS

Snow shoveling can be done more effectively by choosing the right tools for the job based on the type and amount of snow. There are many types of snow removal tools, but we will introduce some examples here.

Examples:

【SNOW DUMP】



www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrLGErprFgM

Used to transport large amounts of snow. There is no need to lift it, which reduces strain on your lower back.

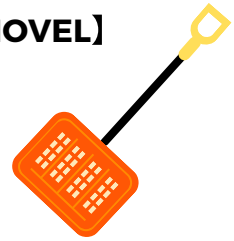
【METAL SHOVEL】



www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIamIqJhGvE

Used to break up hardened snow or cut it into pieces, making it easier to move.

【LIGHT PLASTIC SHOVEL】



www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_2dnukfuC0

A lightweight tool for scooping up and throwing soft, fresh snow. However, straining to throw heavy snow with this can cause injury.

【PICKAXE】



www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKzqvVzu10s

In spring, melting snow can refreeze and harden, so we use this tool to break up ice.

The snow shoveling website run by the Winter Life Promotion Council introduces many other snow removal tools and shows how to use them safely. (Japanese language only)

http://yukikaki.jp/index.html

RULES OF SNOW REMOVAL



The following are rules for snow removal.

1. Do not dump snow on the roads. It is prohibited by the Road Traffic Act!
2. Do not dump snow into rivers or sewers, as water could overflow or lead to flooding.
3. If you live in a condominium or apartment, snow removal from common areas, such as in front of the entrance, may be done on a shift basis. Check the rules for your residence.

References: “Snow Shovelling Information Site”, Winter Life Promotion Council
“Rules and Manner for Sapporo Winter”, “Requests for those living near rivers”, Sapporo City



SNOW REMOVAL ②

BE CAREFUL OF ACCIDENTS WHEN REMOVING SNOW!

Every year during the Hokkaido snowy season, people are injured or die from **falling ice and snow**, **accidents while removing snow from roofs**, and **accidents when using snow blowers**. To prevent accidents occurring during snow removal, you need to be careful on a daily basis.

【SAFETY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE REMOVING SNOW】

＜REMOVING SNOW FROM THE ROOF＞

① **Never remove snow from the roof alone!** Call on family or neighbors and work together.

② To prevent injury in the case of a fall, **leave snow around the edges of the building**.

③ **Be careful on sunny days!** The snow on the roof loosens, so take care not to fall along with it!

④ Don't forget to secure the ladder! Make sure your shoes and ladders are non-slip, and **be careful when going up and down!**

⑤ Wear a safety rope and a helmet, even if it's a hassle!

⑥ **Don't let your guard down,** even if you have a low roof!



＜SNOW REMOVAL IN GENERAL＞

⑦ **Be especially careful** right after you start working and **when you get tired**!

⑧ Turn off the engine before clearing snow from the snow blower!

⑨ **Take care of and frequently inspect equipment** such as snow blowers and lifelines!

⑩ Be prepared for the worst, and **carry your cell phone with you, just in case!**



【OTHER SAFETY TIPS】

- ✔ **BE CAREFUL OF SNOW ON THE ROOF!**
  When passing underneath a roof or eaves, watch out for falling snow or icicles.
- ✔ **BE CAREFUL OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS!**
  Check if anyone is standing where you plan to throw / dump the snow.
- ✔ **BE MINDFUL OF CLOTHES!** Don't wear anything that could get caught in machinery.
- ✔ **TAKE CARE OF YOUR HEALTH!** Don't overdo it, and change any wet clothes afterward
- ✔ **PAY ATTENTION TO THE WEATHER!**
  If a blizzard or heavy snow warning is announced, refrain from going out as much as possible.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SNOW REMOVAL...

Regarding snow removal around your home, please consult your landlord, manager, or neighborhood association.

Regarding snow removal from roads, etc., please consult your local municipal office.

Some municipal offices and NPOs carry out snow removal volunteer activities. If you need help with snow removal, or would like to volunteer, check to see if there is one in your area.

References: "Common accidents during snow removal, and their countermeasures", Cabinet Office
"Prevention of damage caused by snow removal, etc.", Hokkaido Government
"Be wary of snow related accidents", Hokkaido Police



WALKING IN WINTER



SAFETY TIPS

Walkways and roads can be very slippery in winter, so be careful to avoid falls and injuries. Pay particular attention when starting to walk or changing your pace, as these are times when you are most likely to fall.

1 TAKE SMALL STEPS

Walk with small steps, keeping your feet a comfortable distance apart (like a penguin).

2 WALK WITH THE ENTIRE SOLE OF YOUR FOOT

Walk with your center of gravity shifted forward and the soles of your feet parallel to the ground.

3 PAY ATTENTION TO THE ROAD CONDITIONS

There may be a thin layer of ice, or the ice may be hidden under newly fallen snow.

4 TAKE YOUR TIME

Don't rush. Traveling takes longer in winter than in summer, so plan accordingly and take your time.

5 KEEP YOUR HANDS FREE

If you are carrying something in both hands, or have both hands in your pockets, you will not be able to reflexively protect yourself in the event of a fall, which could lead to serious injury.

6 STAY ALERT / ATTENTIVE

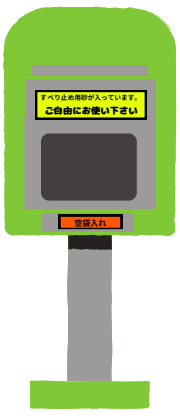
If you have consumed alcohol or are looking at your cell phone while walking, you may be less likely to watch your step, which increases the risk of falling.

BE CAREFUL OF ESPECIALLY SLIPPERY AREAS!

- Pedestrian crossings
- Sidewalks with car access
- Bus stops / taxi stands
- Beginning / end of areas with road heating
- Entrances to subways / underground malls
- Tiled floors of underground malls, etc.

USING TRACTION GRAVEL BOXES

You can use gravel from the boxes placed at large intersections to provide traction on slippery roads or walkways. **Anyone can use the gravel freely**, so spread it on slippery areas or places you think might be dangerous.



【HOW TO USE】

① Take one of the gravel-filled bags ② Spread the gravel

③ Dispose of the empty bag in the gravel box

The website "From Sapporo! A comprehensive site for walking on winter roads safely and comfortably" run by the Winter Life Promotion Council has a section about the different types of gravel boxes and details on how to use them. (Japanese language only)

https://tsurutsuru.jp/information1.html



SUITABLE WINTER CLOTHES

CHOOSING CLOTHES AND ACCESSORIES

To walk safely and comfortably on winter roads, choosing the appropriate clothing and accessories is important. Wear clothing that protects you from the cold, is water repellent, and will absorb shock if you fall.



【HAT】

A thick woolen hat can cushion your head if you fall. If it covers your ears, it can provide more protection from the cold as well.



【GLOVES】

Gloves that cover your wrists and are made of materials such as leather or water-repellent polyester can provide more protection from the cold.



【SCARF】

Scarves that are thicker, longer, and wider can be used to guard the neck, shoulders, and head, and help with temperature regulation.



【BACKPACK】

Using a backpack allows you to keep both of your hands free, which can be safer when walking on slippery roads.



【COAT】

Coats made out of water-repellent materials with padding or down feathers can protect against the cold. Those with a hood that are long enough to cover your rear can be even warmer!



【SWEATER】

When it comes to sweaters, it is actually warmer to wear several layers of thin material rather than one layer of thick material. It's also convenient because you can remove layers if you get hot.



【THICK TIGHTS】

Wearing thick tights or long johns under your skirt or pants will help keep you warm and protect you from the impact of a fall.



【WINTER SHOES】

Winter shoes are shoes that are warm, water-resistant, and have non-slip soles. There are many types of non-slip soles and non-slip shoe attachments, so please consult with store staff before purchasing.

For more information on clothing to stay warm and comfortable in winter, please check “From Sapporo! A comprehensive site for walking on winter roads safely and comfortably,” run by the Winter Life Promotion Council (Japanese only)

① **CLOTHING** https://tsurutsuru.jp/kotsu7.html

② **SHOES** https://tsurutsuru.jp/kotsu5.html

③ **NON-SLIP SHOE ATTACHMENTS** https://tsurutsuru.jp/kotsu6.htmll



DRIVING IN WINTER

PREPARATIONS BEFORE YOU DRIVE

When driving on winter roads, it is important to change to winter tires early. You will also need to remove snow from the car before you drive.

ABOUT TIRES

Driving on snowy or icy roads without taking proper measures to prevent slipping is against the law, so change to winter tires as early as possible. You can change tires at a shop or do it yourself. You may also need to attach tire chains, so be sure to learn how to do so.

【HOW TO CHANGE TIRES】



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oCxxzybDoA

This is a how-to video for changing tires created by the Japan Automobile Federation (JAF.)

【HOW TO ATTACH CHAINS】



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HJFe9JkAf0

This is a how-to video for attaching chains created by JAF.

【PRECAUTIONS WHEN INSTALLING AND DRIVING ON WINTER TIRES】



- ✔ When changing to winter tires, install them on all wheels.
- ✔ Summer tires and winter tires have different handling traits. Drive carefully after changing the tires until you are familiar with the handling characteristics.
- ✔ When you install new winter tires, be sure to take them on a break-in drive.
  *For details on how to break in new tires, see the Japan Automobile Tire Association website.
- ✔ When driving on snowy or icy roads, the tread of the winter tires should be no more than halfway worn down (the tread depth indicator should not be exposed.)
- ✔ Once winter has ended, change back to summer tires as appropriate for the road conditions.

REMOVE SNOW FROM CAR BEFORE DRIVING!



1. After removing the snow from the driver's side door and roof, open the door, start the engine, and turn on the defrosters (front and rear).
2. Remove snow from the roof to prevent it from falling over your front window while you are driving and blocking your view.
3. Remove snow and ice from windows on both sides of the vehicle.
4. Remove snow and ice from the windshield, and put the wipers back down.
5. Remove snow and ice from the rear window.
6. Remove snow from the front wheel wells so that it does not interfere with the tires while steering.
7. Shovel snow from the road / area in front of the vehicle.
8. Get in the driver's seat, confirm that you can see properly, and drive away!

Sources: "Precautions when installing winter tires and driving", Japan Automobile Tire Association
"Q&A for All Things Car Related", Japan Automobile Federation (JAF)
"Be careful of slipping in these places", Hokkaido Police



DRIVING IN WINTER

PREPARATIONS BEFORE YOU DRIVE

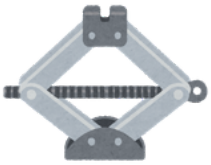
ITEMS TO PREPARE

You never know what kind of trouble you might encounter on winter roads, especially if you are not used to driving in such conditions. Be sure to have these items in your car as they can be very useful in an emergency.



【TIRE CHAINS】

Chains are not often used with winter studless tires, but they may be necessary in case of deep snow.



【CAR JACK】

Make sure your car is equipped with a jack. If you need to use it, jack up the car on a safe, flat, hard surface.



【JUMPER CABLES】

You can use these to jump your car if the battery dies. Be sure to choose the appropriate jumper cables for your car.



【FLASHLIGHT】

It is handy to have a flashlight if you need to investigate car trouble or attach / remove chains at night.



【SNOW / ICE SCRAPER】

A scraper is useful for removing frost and ice from the windshield in the morning.



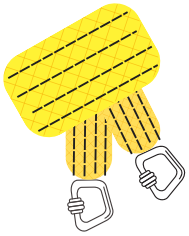
【DE-ICING SPRAY】

You can use the spray to de-ice keyholes or defrost windshields. It's also useful if the wipers get stuck to the windshield.



【SHOVEL】

You may need a shovel to remove accumulated snow in a parking lot, or if your car slips and gets stuck.



【TOW ROPE】

If your car gets stuck, you may need a tow rope. Be sure to choose a thick rope with sturdy metal fittings.



【TRACTION ASSISTS】

If your car gets stuck and your tires spin, you can use anti-slip gravel or a traction mat placed under the tires to help get the car moving again.



【GLOVES / BOOTS】

These can be useful if you need to work outside of the car, attaching or removing chains, or shoveling snow.



【WARM GEAR】

Prepare blankets and warm clothes in the car, just in case you get stuck, or your car breaks down.



【WATER / FOOD】

Prepare water and food in the car in case you have to spend a long period of time in your car.

Source: "What should you prepare before driving on winter roads?", Japan Automobile Federation (JAF)



DRIVING IN WINTER

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Driving on winter roads requires more caution than on dry roads in the summer. Please take the following precautions to avoid traffic accidents.

FOUR KEY POINTS FOR SAFE WINTER DRIVING

1 **DRIVE AT LEAST 10 KM/H SLOWER** THAN YOU WOULD IN SUMMER!



2 WHEN THE ROAD IS ICY, **KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE** (AT LEAST 2X THE USUAL DISTANCE) FROM THE CAR IN FRONT OF YOU



3 **SUDDEN** BRAKING, **SUDDEN** ACCELERATION, AND **AGGRESSIVE** STEERING ARE **DANGEROUS**!

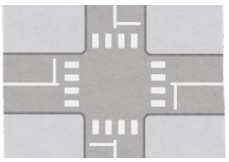


4 WHEN VISIBILITY IS POOR, **LOOK AHEAD** AND **REDUCE YOUR SPEED EARLY**!



BE CAREFUL OF SLIPPING IN THESE PLACES!

【INTERSECTIONS】



Intersections can be slippery and dangerous as ice and snow are polished smooth by traffic. Also, be aware that the intersection itself may not be visible due to high snow banks.

【HILLS】



It is difficult to stop on a downhill slope, so slow down sufficiently beforehand. When going uphill, be careful when you start accelerating.

【CURVES】



The centrifugal force of a curve means it is easy for the car to drift towards the other lane. Be aware of oncoming traffic.

【BRIDGES】



The road surface on bridges is cooled from above and below, which can cause black ice. Remember that bridges = icy, and be careful when crossing.

【TUNNEL ENTRANCES / EXITS】



It can be difficult to see ahead as the eyes adjust to changes in light and dark, so it is necessary to anticipate changes in road conditions when driving.

【IN THE SHADE】



Even if the ice has melted on sunny roads, shaded areas may remain frozen. Please be careful and drive slowly.

Sources: "Precautions when installing winter tires and driving", Japan Automobile Tire Association
"Be careful of slipping in these places", Hokkaido Police

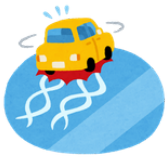


DRIVING IN WINTER

ROAD AND VISIBILITY CONDITIONS

Hokkaido roads in winter can be extremely harsh for drivers due to blizzards and icy conditions. Before you drive, be aware of the conditions you may encounter.

TYPES OF ROAD CONDITIONS & SLIPPINESS



【COMPACTED SNOW】

A white road surface is caused when snow is compacted by traffic. This type of road surface may become extremely slippery depending on the temperature and traffic volume, so please be careful.

【GRANULAR SNOW】

This type of snow does not contain moisture, and becomes crunchy or granulated.

【BLACK ICE】

Black ice occurs when the road freezes over, and the ice looks black with no gloss or shine. Black ice can be thick, like a plate, or thin, like a film.

If the black ice is thin, it is often wet, and you must be extremely cautious to avoid slipping when driving.

【POWDERY SNOW】

Dry, freshly fallen snow, or snow that has been blown into the air by wind is powdery snow. This type of snow is often accompanied by poor visibility, as the snow does not settle easily.

【SLUSH (SHERBET)】

This slushy, wet snow resembles sherbet and is often seen on warm days or in early spring.

The Northern Road Navi "Winter Driving Guide" explains different road conditions (with images.)

https://northern-road.ceri.go.jp/navi/info/guide1_3.html#c

TRAFFIC ARROW



VISIBILITY IN A SNOWSTORM

1 GOOD (> 1000 m)

You can see quite a distance along the road, as well as distant mountains, hills, and buildings. Even if it snows a little, visibility is such that you wouldn't notice a big difference compared to when it's sunny.

2 SLIGHTLY POOR (500～1000 m)

You can see that it is snowing and that the snow is being blown by the wind. In terms of visibility you can still clearly see the lines of the road and surrounding trees. Although visibility is not so impaired that it will affect driving, it is necessary to be prepared for sudden changes in weather.

3 POOR (200～500 m)

From the driver's seat, visibility is noticeably poor. The visibility is such that you can see three or more traffic arrows ahead. Even if visibility is poor, you don't have issues seeing the lines of the road, or the cars in front of you, and the flow of traffic does not change much from usual.

4 VERY POOR (100～200 m)

You can just barely see two traffic arrows ahead. Due to snowfall or blizzard conditions, visibility is significantly poor, so people would likely slow down. You can see the car in front of you and the lines of the road, so you can drive relatively well. However, you should be prepared as visibility could suddenly drop to less than 100 meters temporarily.

5 SIGNIFICANT VISIBILITY IMPAIRMENT (< 100 m)

The visibility is so poor that you can barely see one traffic arrow ahead, and the taillights of the car in front of you may be obscured. In cases of extremely severe visibility problems, you may feel like you can't see anything in front of you at all because the entire area is completely white. Due to poor visibility, drivers begin to drive slowly. In addition, the speed difference between vehicles increases, leading to more following and group driving.

The Northern Road Navi "Winter Driving Guide" explains the different visibility conditions (with images and videos.)

https://northern-road.ceri.go.jp/navi/info/guide1_2.html#b

Source: "Winter Driving Guide", National Research and Development Agency Civil Engineering Research Institute, Cold Region Civil Engineering Research Institute



DRIVING IN WINTER

PREPARING FOR AN EMERGENCY

CHECK THE ROAD CONDITIONS

Before you depart, check the weather, road conditions, traffic regulation information, visibility information, etc. on the way to your destination. If you think it might be difficult to drive due to heavy snow, etc., consider changing your departure time or using public transportation.

BLIZZARD VISIBILITY IMPAIRMENT MAP



www.hkd.mlit.go.jp/ky/kn/dou_iji/ud49g70000000qlh.html

The Hokkaido Regional Development Bureau created a map that provides information on poor visibility areas due to snowstorms, places to put on and take off chains, and precautions when driving on winter roads.

Languages: Japanese and English

BLIZZARD VISIBILITY INFORMATION PORTAL SITE

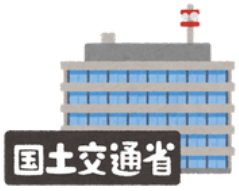


www.northern-road.ceri.go.jp/navi/touge/fubuki.htm

The Cold Region Civil Engineering Research Institute provides current visibility and forecast information in Hokkaido to assist drivers in making decisions about their actions during snowstorms.

Language: Japanese

ROAD INFORMATION PROVISION SYSTEM



www.road-info-prvs.mlit.go.jp/roadinfo/

This site provides information related to traffic regulations (road closures due to abnormal weather, disasters, construction, etc.) on expressways, national roads, and prefectural roads managed by some local governments. You can check the actual road conditions with live road cameras.

Languages: Japanese and English

DRIVE TRAFFIC "DORA TORA"



www.drivetraffic.jp/

This web service delivers traffic information for expressways nationwide in real-time. You can also receive notification emails about road closures and check information on traffic congestion predictions, construction regulations, road surface information, etc.

Languages: Japanese, English, Korean, Thai, and Chinese (Traditional and Simplified)

IF YOU GET STUCK...

If your car gets stuck due to a snowdrift or dead battery, remember the following to save your life.



✔ STAY NEAR THE CAR!

If you leave your car during a snowstorm, you run the risk of getting lost. Do not leave your vehicle unless you are sure of the location of the evacuation site or your rescuer.



✔ CALL FOR HELP!

Pull the car over and turn the hazard lights on. When calling for help, be sure to accurately describe your location. Signs with the highway number and kilometer count are posted every 1km on national highways.



✔ STAY SAFE IN THE CAR!

If the exhaust pipe gets buried in snow, the exhaust fumes may flow back into the vehicle and cause carbon monoxide poisoning, which can be fatal. Please regularly remove snow from around the exhaust pipe and open the windows slightly to help ventilation.



✔ JUST IN CASE!

"Roadside Stations" (Michi no Eki) have 24-hour parking lots, restrooms, and telephones. Some also have shops and restaurants. Please stop at a Roadside Station if you feel unsafe driving due to snowy conditions.

Source: "Be prepared for Driving on Winter Roads", Hokkaido Development Bureau



ENJOYING WINTER SPORTS SAFELY

Winter sports such as skiing, snowboarding, and mountain climbing are popular in Hokkaido. If you enjoy venturing into backcountry areas, it is especially vital that you know all of the safety precautions in advance.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WHEN SKIING

- Don't forget to check your bindings and do a warm-up before you ski / board.
- When setting off skiing, merging onto other courses, or crossing slopes, check your surroundings to avoid getting in the way of other skiers. Be careful when passing.
- Observe signs, notices, and warnings, and follow patrol instructions. In particular, do NOT enter areas where skiing is prohibited.
- Choose a course based on your skill level, the slope, snow quality, weather, and other conditions, and be sure not to push yourself too hard.
- Avoid standing or sitting in the center of the course. When you stop, move to the edge.
- If visibility is poor due to wind or snow, don't take chances, and stop skiing until conditions improve.

Source: "Enjoy Winter Sports without Accidents!!", Hokkaido Government

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WHEN CLIMBING IN WINTER

- Choose a mountain that matches your physical strength and skill level.
- Make a climbing plan that allows for plenty of time.
- Make sure you have a communication device.
- Equip yourself with rain gear and cold-weather clothing in preparation for emergencies.
- Share your climbing plan with your family, friends, workplace, and the police.



Source: "Preventing mountain climbing accidents", Hokkaido Government

CLIMBING PLAN (TOZAN TODOKE)

Create a climbing plan that matches you and your climbing partners' physical strength and skills, and submit it to your family, friends, workplace, and the police. The plan should include your planned climbing route, your equipment, and the climbers' names, ages, contact information, etc.

HOKKAIDO POLICE

(Japanese, English)

https://www.police.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/info/chiiki/sangaku/sangaku-top.html

COMPASS

(Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean)

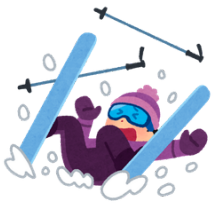
https://www.mt-compass.com/

YAMAP

(Japanese)

https://yamap.com/plans/new

*The Hokkaido Police have agreements with COMPASS and YAMAP that allow them to access climbing plans (tozan todoke) for the purpose of responding to accidents in the mountains.



ENJOYING WINTER SPORTS SAFELY

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN THE BACKCOUNTRY

1 CHECK WEATHER & AVALANCHE INFORMATION



- Are there advisories or warnings of wind / snow?
- Is there a high risk of avalanche?
- Do you have a way to check the latest weather forecast?

2 CHECK THE TERRAIN & ROUTE



- Do you have the skill and endurance for your chosen route?
- Do you have a clear vision of the route from start to finish?

3 BRING THE PROPER WINTER EQUIPMENT



- Do you have the 3 MUST items for winter (beacon, probe, shovel)?
- Do you have the equipment and food to survive in bad weather?
- Do you have a mobile GPS, a communication device (such as a phone), and spare batteries?

4 SUBMIT A CLIMBING PLAN



- Do you have a climbing partner or partners? Avoid going alone.
- Is your climbing plan feasible? Have you submitted the plan?

5 HAVE THE COURAGE TO TURN BACK



- Are you prepared to turn back if the weather or visibility takes a bad turn?
- Do you know what to do to survive in the worst-case scenario?

If you get lost...

- Don't walk unnecessarily. Wait for rescue in a place protected from precipitation and wind.
- Alert the search team of your location using your mobile phone or something that makes a high-pitched sound, such as a whistle. A whistle allows sound to travel far and alert search teams to your whereabouts, leading to early detection and saving your life.



Some ski areas may have special rules, so be sure to check before entering the backcountry.

Source: "Preventing mountain climbing accidents", Hokkaido Government

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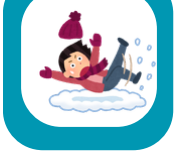
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