

From the Office of the Sheriff:

Every fall members of the Sheriff's Department meet with the Dodge County Highway Department and discuss winter road maintenance and procedures. Our intent is to work together as county departments and understand the protocols each of us have and how each of us reacts to winter snow emergencies. This annual meeting is very productive. With a complete understanding of each others roles and responsibilities, we are able to work together and maximize the resources available during winter conditions. Yet, we as county departments can do all the planning and coordination we want and it means nothing if we do not ensure that you, the motorist, understand how we respond.

All of us wish, regardless of weather conditions and snow fall totals, we can always traverse our state and county roadways. All of us wish that when we travel during inclement conditions, should we run off the roadway or break down, that a deputy will be there to assist. And for those whom own a four-wheel drive vehicle, we do understand that you "think" you who can drive faster and are immune from running off the roadway. These assumptions are not credible and the results can be very dangerous.

When a winter storm approaches, we would hope that people plan for such storms. Recommendations include shopping before the storm, changing travel plans, and ensuring if you are required to travel you have the necessary items in your vehicle. These items include warm clothing, cell phone, snacks, a blanket, or any items that would allow you to be comfortable overnight should your vehicle become disabled. Do not assume that if you run off the roadway or get stuck in a huge drift that we will get to you. If you could not traverse the roadways do not expect that we can.

This winter the Sheriff's Dept. will not be as aggressive as we have been in the past in assisting motorists in need. Should you run off the roadway during a blizzard, you may be taken to a hotel vs. a wrecker towing you out and sending you on your way. Your vehicle will be removed when it is safe to do so. We should not be putting the lives of tow truck operators in jeopardy just so you can drive when you should not be. Should you be stuck in a drift at 2:00 a.m. on a town road, we may direct you to stay with your vehicle until county plows reach you after 4:00 a.m.

Too often, those that become stuck in the snow or jeopardize our resources trying to rescue them should not have been out driving to begin with. I recall a car full of high school students last year. School was cancelled due to the weather. They decided to travel to Beaver Dam for a movie and ran off the road. They did not think that they should have stayed home nor did their parents have any issue with them traveling during the winter storm for the purpose of seeing a movie. These parents would more than likely be the same ones who would be upset at the school district had they not cancelled school and forced their children to ride the bus under such terrible road conditions. Those that drive when they should not only jeopardize those that must; doctors, nurses, firefighters, and police officers. More importantly, you hinder the ability for the county to safely clear the roads.

We work very well with our local media to keep you apprised of winter road conditions. We would ask that you not call the Sheriff's Department and ask if you should travel or how the road conditions are. We do not necessarily know current road conditions county-wide. If you live in town, understand that conditions as they appear out your window do not accurately portray the conditions out of town. If you must drive, allow more time to reach your destination. Adjust your speed to the existing road conditions, slow down, and above all, wear your safety belt. We are committed to the safety and security of those whom must drive during periods of inclement weather. We are not in the business of enabling those who don't know better. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.