ASCIP

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SAFETY Spotlight 2026



FEATURE ARTICLE

Fall Back into Safe Winter Driving Habits

Changing Seasons Requires Increase Safety Awareness Behind the Wheel

November brings shorter days, earlier sunsets, cooler mornings, and changing driving conditions. With students, pedestrians, bicyclists, school buses, and employees sharing the road, drivers need to be especially alert. ASCIP wants to remind all our members - whether you're driving for your district or heading home to your family, small changes in your driving habits can make a big difference.

Winter driving hazards to watch for:

EARLIER SUNSETS AND REDUCED VISIBILITY

More employees may drive home in darkness. Students attending after-school activities, pedestrians, and bicyclists can be harder to see. Safety tip: Slow down, increase following distance, and scan intersections and crosswalks carefully.

Continued on next page →

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SUN GLARE

The lower angle of the fall sun can temporarily impair visibility during morning and afternoon commutes.

Safety tip: Keep your windshield clean, use your visor, and wear appropriate sunglasses. Pull over if glare makes driving unsafe.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Phones, navigation systems, conversations, and other distractions take attention away from the road.

Safety tip: Set navigation before driving, put your phone away, and avoid multitasking.

COLDER MORNINGS, DEW, AND FOG

Condensation and fog can reduce visibility; wet pavement can increase stopping distances. Wind chill affects how cold skin feels but does not independently cause pavement to freeze.

Safety tip: Clear all windows; check wipers, defrosters, headlights, and tire pressure.

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INCREASED SCHOOL-AREA TRAFFIC

Arrival and dismissal bring vehicles, buses, students, pedestrians, and bicyclists together.

Safety tip: Reduce speed in school zones and parking lots. Watch for students between parked vehicles.

FATIGUE AND TIME CHANGE

Changes in sleep routines can affect alertness and reaction time. AAA research indicates modest sleep loss can significantly increase crash risk.

Safety tip: Get adequate rest, recognize drowsiness, and avoid driving when fatigued.

Safe driving is everyone's responsibility, whether operating a school bus, maintenance vehicle, district automobile, or personal vehicle. The same habits that protect students and coworkers also protect our families and communities.

Sources National Safety Council; AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety; Automobile Club of Southern California; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Research published in 2025 found a 13% increase in fatal pedestrian and bicyclist crashes during the five weeks following the fall time change.

Member Tip: Plan extra travel time, avoid rushing, and keep your vehicle well maintained. Check mirrors, windshield, and visibility. Make sure headlights and wipers work. Put your phone away and buckle up.

ALLIANCE OF SCHOOLS FOR COOPERATIVE INSURANCE PROGRAMS

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The most effective safety programs are the ones that become part of the school's culture — not just a response to incidents, but a daily commitment to every person on campus.

