

Trucking Tips for Winter

By: Russ Van Beek

The purpose of this article is to share information in an effort to reduce the bad effect winter weather may have on our equipment and your ability to keep rolling when others are stuck. In all honesty, it requires planning from both the driver and our maintenance personnel. Winter driving requires that you recognize changing conditions AND take appropriate steps to avoid costly damage and down time.

#1) We supply extension cords, jumper cables, winter fronts, and chains to be used when necessary. If you do not know proper procedure on when and how to use them – ASK. We will gladly review policy and proper procedures with you. When done – check them for unusual wear & put them away properly (you may need them again). If they need repair – report it immediately.

#2) Brake shoes freeze to brake drums when moisture turns to ice. Many times a driver begins a trip in wet weather with above freezing temperatures – then travels into colder areas. Be aware of frozen brake shoes – especially when picking up a drop trailer. (This includes drop trailers at our terminals) When the outside temp is below freezing (32 degrees F or 0 degrees C) make sure all tires are turning. Check for skid marks and “feel” for excessive drag. Heyl pays the cost of the ruined tire and the service call – you will lose time, miles, and bonus. Often a hammer to the brake shoe will break it loose from the drum and you’re rolling without lost time and additional expense. It’s a good winter tool to invest in. Dragging tires will kill a quarterly bonus.

#3) Extension cords for block heaters should be used until temperatures reach minus 10 degrees F. If temps are more than 10 below – leave the truck running at low idle. When you are going to be away from the truck for more than a 10 hour break DO NOT use the APU to keep the engine block warm. When you are away from the truck on home time (includes terminal locations) remove perishable food items from the cooler/fridge and take them home with you. Double check to make sure all interior lights and fan switches are off - every time you leave the truck.

#4) IDLE TIME IS APPROVED when the outside air temperature is colder than 10 degrees below zero F (wind chill does not count). We acknowledge it burns more fuel but in EXTREME cold it is the price we are willing to pay to keep the fuel from gelling. The cost of the call out/start service, and the lost time for the driver are more expensive than the fuel or fuel bonus. The basic rule is: plug in the truck to 10 below - idle it at more than 10 below.

#5) Avoid use of fuel additives in the tractor tanks. Alcohol based additives thin the fuel so it burns hotter & faster – which reduces fuel mpg. Fuel additive purchases must be approved prior to use (mostly for reefer tanks). Avoid straight #2 fuel in reefers during winter months, Akron & Sioux Falls have #1 fuel for reefers.

#6) It is a good practice when driving in or toward extreme cold to keep fuel levels at no less than ¼ full, drain air tanks more often (especially when heading from the south into cold areas). Additional details regarding the different APU types are available at each terminal location.



Let's have a successful winter.



