Winter Pre-Trip Checklist

Commercial Truck Drivers | Cold Weather Inspection Guide

WINTER DRIVING SAFETY SERIES

FIRST UNDERWRITERS
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Complete this checklist before every trip during winter conditions (October–April). Cold weather creates hazards that standard pre-trips may not fully address. Check each item and note any deficiencies before departure.

Driver Name	Unit #	Trailer #	Date	Temp (°F)	Weather

1 Engine, Battery & Starting System

- ■ **Battery:** adequate charge; terminals clean, tight, corrosion-free
- ■ **Block heater:** connected overnight (if equipped); cord and plug undamaged
- ■ **Engine oil:** winter-grade oil at proper level; no thickening or sludge
- ■ **Coolant / antifreeze:** tested to at least -34°F; proper level; no visible leaks
- ■ **Belts & hoses:** no cracking, glazing, or excessive wear; proper tension
- ■ **Glow plugs / intake heater:** functioning properly (diesel engines)
- ■ **Fuel:** minimum half tank; winter-blend diesel; no gelling
- ■ **Fuel filter & water separator:** no ice or gel blockage; separator drained
- ■ **Air dryer:** functioning; desiccant cartridge in good condition

2 Brakes & Air System

- ■ **Air tanks:** drained of moisture; no ice in valves or lines
- ■ **Brake pads / shoes:** adequate thickness; not frozen to drums
- ■ **Parking brake:** releases fully; no ice binding mechanism
- ■ **Air lines & fittings:** no cracks, leaks, or frozen connections
- ■ **Brake chambers:** no ice accumulation; push rods move freely
- ■ **ABS indicator:** light cycles off after engine start; system operational
- ■ **Glad hands:** sealed properly; rubber gaskets pliable; no ice in couplings
- ■ **Air pressure build-up:** reaches governor cut-out within manufacturer specs

3 Tires, Wheels & Chains

- ■ **Tread depth:** min. 4/32" steer, 2/32" drive and trailer; winter tires if required
- ■ **Tire pressure:** checked cold; adjusted for temp (loses ~1 PSI per 10°F drop)
- ■ **Tire condition:** no cuts, bulges, exposed cords, or uneven wear
- ■ **Lug nuts:** all present and properly torqued; no rust streaks
- ■ **Chains on board:** correct size; all links, cross-chains, and binders present
- ■ **Chain condition:** no broken or worn links; hooks and fasteners intact
- ■ **Chain install:** driver can install chains within required time
- ■ **Chain law awareness:** route requirements verified (WA / OR / CA / CO, etc.)

■ **Tire Pressure Note —**
Pressure drops ~1 PSI for every 10°F decrease. A tire at 100 PSI / 70°F reads only 94 PSI at 10°F. Always check cold and adjust to manufacturer specs.

4 Lights, Visibility & Electrical

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- ☐ **Headlights:** high/low beam functional; lenses clear
- ☐ **Tail / brake lights:** all functional; lenses clear
- ☐ **Turn signals:** front & rear; tractor and trailer
- ☐ **Marker / clearance:** all functional; cleared of snow/ice
- ☐ **Hazard flashers:** 4-way operational
- ☐ **Wipers:** winter blades; adequate pressure; no streak
- ☐ **Washer fluid:** winter-rated (-20°F+); reservoir full
- ☐ **Defroster / heater:** hot air all settings; reaches windshield
- ☐ **Mirrors:** clean; adjusted; heated mirrors working
- ☐ **Windshield:** no cracks; clear of ice/snow/fog

5 Cab Safety & Emergency Equipment

- ☐ **Emergency triangles:** 3 reflective; accessible
- ☐ **Fire extinguisher:** charged; current inspection
- ☐ **First aid kit:** stocked and accessible
- ☐ **Flashlight:** working; extra batteries
- ☐ **Ice scraper / snow brush:** full-length for roof/trailer
- ☐ **Extra washer fluid:** 1+ gal winter-rated
- ☐ **Blankets / warm clothing:** blanket, gloves, hat, layers
- ☐ **Food & water:** non-perishable; 24+ hr supply
- ☐ **Cell phone / charger:** charged; vehicle charger works
- ☐ **Sand / kitty litter:** traction aid on board
- ☐ **Shovel:** compact; for clearing/digging
- ☐ **Jumper cables / booster:** on board and functional

6 Trailer, Cargo & Securement

- ☐ **Trailer roof:** cleared of ALL snow and ice before departure (required by law in most states)
- ☐ **Fifth wheel:** greased with winter-grade grease; jaws locked; no ice preventing engagement
- ☐ **Kingpin area:** no ice buildup between tractor and trailer connection
- ☐ **Landing gear:** fully raised; handle secured; no ice jamming gears
- ☐ **Trailer doors:** open and close freely; seals intact; hinges not frozen
- ☐ **Cargo securement:** tie-downs re-tensioned for cold (straps contract); load stable
- ☐ **Reefer unit (if applicable):** pre-trip run completed; temp set point confirmed; fuel adequate
- ☐ **Mud flaps / splash guards:** intact and properly positioned; not frozen or missing

7 Route Planning & Weather Check

- ☐ **Weather forecast:** departure, en-route, destination
- ☐ **Road conditions:** state DOT; closures; chain advisories
- ☐ **Route planned:** primary + alternate if passes close
- ☐ **Chain-up areas:** identified; know chain-up/off zones
- ☐ **Fuel stops:** planned for severe weather availability
- ☐ **Dispatch notified:** route plan communicated; check-in set

Deficiencies / Notes:

Pre-Trip Inspection Certification

I have completed this winter pre-trip inspection and confirm all checked items are satisfactory. Any deficiencies have been noted and reported to maintenance prior to departure.

Driver Signature: **Date:** **Time:**

Supervisor Review (if required):

❄ **Keep This Checklist in Your Cab —**
Print copies for daily use during winter months (Oct–Apr). Report all deficiencies to maintenance before departure. Never operate a vehicle with safety-critical winter deficiencies. More resources at firstunderwriters.com/risk-tips/trucking or (425) 242-5357.

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