

## JANUARY 2024 WINTER DRIVING SAFETY TIPS IN BROOKFIELD

Of the 61 Town Highway road miles in Brookfield, most of them are unpaved “Back Roads” aka “dirt roads”. Therefore, we will focus on safety tips that are more common on “dirt roads” in the Winter

Most people in Vermont driving on dirt roads, drive near the middle of the road where it is more traveled and safer looking. That means when they see a car approaching them in the oncoming lane, they must move over to their right quickly and probably slow down. That works well when they can see opposing traffic some distance ahead. However, on blind hilltops and sharp turns that can turn into an accident or a near accident. **The Safety Tip-** slow down before hill tops and sharp curves and move over to the right as far as you can safely to give anyone coming at you a chance to miss hitting you or skidding out of control as they attempt to take evasive action. This may delay your journey a little but will make it safer.

Dirt roads are prone to warming up on warm days and developing ruts. The air temperature may be below freezing but if there is sufficient sunshine, the road surface may melt. Then the ruts freeze up and may be filled with packed snow and ice. If you hit a frozen rut with a tire, it may throw your car around, requiring evasive action on your part. If this occurs when you are approaching an on-coming vehicle, it can be “problematic” and dramatic. The faster you are going, the less likely you will be able to recover with or without oncoming traffic. **The Safety Tip-** Start your trip a little earlier and go slower. Ruts are not always visible or predictable. Conditions can change rapidly with changing weather. Do not use cruise control on back roads in the Winter!

Most back roads are maintained by plow trucks with wing plows that push the snow back off the road some distance to avoid having the snow banks make the roads narrower in snowy winters or to make the roads soupy in the Spring. That is a good thing! However, one consequence is that everything that is plowed is not safe to drive on. There may be places where the shoulder drops away under the snow but looks OK. Obstacles may not be visible. **Safety Tip-** Pay attention to the shoulders on the roads that you travel to identify those places. If you do find yourself driving off in one of those places, avoid making sharp turns and extra throttle to get back on the traveled portion. You might make it or you might roll your vehicle with you and your occupants in it. Stop. Try backing up. If not successful, get a tow. A tow is cheaper than a rollover with possible injuries. Please wear reflective clothing if you are out of the car trying to extricate your car from a snow bank. You want oncoming traffic to see you day or night!

**Brookfield Traffic Ordinance, Article VI, Section 1c.** There will be no parking of unattended vehicles at any time between December 1 and April 15 in the traveled portion of Brookfield Town Highways or in the Town Right of Way where it obstructs or interferes with road maintenance or snow removal operations at any time during the year. **Section 2.** Any vehicle parked in violation of the provisions of this article may be ticketed (fined) and/or summarily removed at the owner's expense, by order of a duly authorized law enforcement officer or the Brookfield Road Crew Foreman (or his designee from the Brookfield Town Road Crew).

**Big Safety Tip-** Above all, please wear your seat belt! We keep reading or hearing of accidents that could have been survivable or had minimal injuries that were fatal or had life threatening injuries because seat belts were not used.

Brookfield Public Safety Advisory Committee

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