

Free Wheeling

December is a gay month and streets and highways. A dark, dismal month. And both sides of the coin spell danger on from too many people who for-

get they are going to have to drive after an office party or a social event where alcoholic beverages flow freely.

The results are a predictable upswing in traffic mishaps and resulting injuries, death and property damage. Last December is a case in point—141 died in

wrecks. That's not so gay! Specifically, studies by the Department of Motor Vehicles into the causes of wrecks, show that "had been drinking" is a strong contributing factor. That traditional "one for the road" is about the most deadly Yule gift anyone

can offer a motorist. It would be kinder to offer a round of Russian Roulette.

In addition to party problems in December, highways are most likely to be treacherous. Reduced speed becomes a cardinal rule. The traffic experts say drive at a rate at which you are absolute-

ly sure you can stay within a few feet.

Here are some of their suggestions to keep from making winter driving blunders:

BRAKES. Have them equilibrated. You need balanced braking for slippery going. And, they add, that the best thing to do in

slippery driving weather is to drive in such a way that you use brakes very little. Winter time braking is tricky business. Roll easy.

MUFFLER. Odorless fumes from a faulty muffler or tail-pipe can kill you. Drive with a window partly open. Never start

your car in a closed garage. It's not even a good idea to wait in a closed car with the engine running.

WINDSHIELD. Live wiper blades, proper arm tension and a working defroster are wintertime musts. Check them.

LIGHTS. Headlights, taillights, brake lights and directional signals should work A-OK. And they must be kept clean.

TIRES. Tires should have enough good tread to bite into snow. Snow tires are better.

In this area, the experts say remember what you learned about stopping on snow and icy surfaces. Roll easy, with short braking punches, then let off so that you don't merely slide on patches of snow or slush. Rubber has a natural tendency to grip even the most slippery of surfaces. Give it a chance, roll to a stop, don't slide and maybe miss an intersection.

CHAINS. Reinforced tire chains are best for severe winter conditions. Tests by winter driving experts prove that when the going is tough, the best answer is reinforced tire chains. Get a set and be prepared to use them if the weather is really bad.

The vehicles agency also adds this: Winter or summer, use your seat belts. If you don't have them, get them.

That's just plain sense. When there is danger of sliding, there is danger of hitting something solid. And this is where seat belts pay off. They will hold you and your passengers firmly, instead of hurling you into the windshield or worse, out onto that cold hard pavement.

SUDDEN THAWT. In traffic anger is only one letter short of danger.

SHORT SHOTS. In Toledo, Ohio, a driver was charged by police with swiping away at small compact cars with a fly swatter as he drove along the highway.

Custom cars are nothing new. In 1899, anyone with a little mechanical aptitude could buy "Dykes No. 1 Outfit," a do-it-yourself automobile kit which came complete with engine, transmission, wheels, steering device and radiator—everything but the body. The kit was popular up to the introduction of mass production techniques in automobile manufacturing.

And in Washington, an automobile writer walked up to a driver in a parked car to ask him a question, only to find out that the "driver" was an inflated balloon. The balloon was the brainchild of an inventor, who claimed it would prevent auto thefts. Cost \$15.

FILLERS

Ironie
The editor of a Toledo, Ohio, weekly picked up a copy of a pre-election edition and found his newspaper endorsed his opponent for the state legislature.

Food Complaints
When a sign appeared on the San Quentin bulletin board, the prison newspaper had a few comments. The sign: "Consuming stolen food from the mess will not be dealt with lightly." The comments in the newspaper: "We always thought the department of corrections bought their food from legitimate dealers."

On the Go
A Swallowfield, England, man, hired a 40-car train to move his farm—livestock, machinery, etc.—about 190 miles to Launceston.

Recognized
When a Kansas City Mo., 22-year-old went down to the courthouse with his future bride to get a marriage license, he was recognized as wanted on armed robbery charges and arrested.

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