

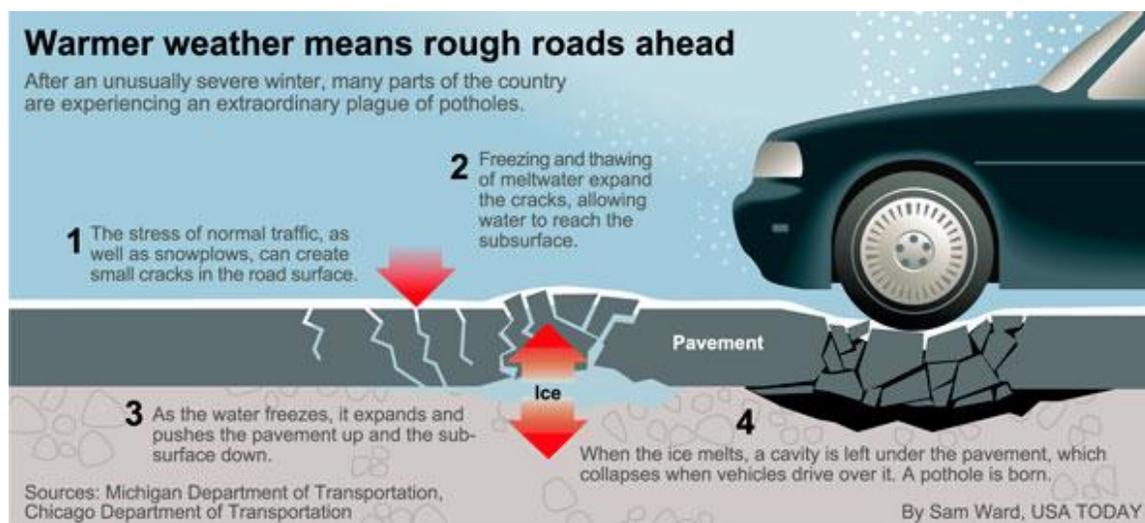


HOLES

Many of us think of the great Louis Sachar book, or the movie starring Shia LaBeouf, but holes, specifically potholes, are all too real this year because of our brutal winter. Most importantly, potholes can be a challenging safety hazard for drivers.

Potholes are caused when freezing and thawing water gets into cracks in the road surface, which expand and contract with temperature. The constant pressure of traffic, snow plows, and more water on all of this expansion and compression results in holes. The holes start out small, but before long, they grow larger and larger and deeper as the layers of road surface crumble away.

Source: USA Today



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Potholes can do serious damage to a vehicle, puncturing tires, compromising tire rims, cracking, scratching and denting the body and knocking the vehicle out of alignment and wheels out of balance. Hitting a pothole can not only damage your vehicle but cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Driving around or avoiding potholes is not always the answer either, as there are other vehicles, pedestrians and objects which could be in harm's way.

So what to do?

Here are the “Lucky Seven” pothole safe driving tips:

1. **WATCH** -- Be a SmartDriver by keeping an eye out for potholes, puddles (which may be hiding potholes), pedestrians and other vehicles.
2. **DON'T SPEED** – Driving too fast for conditions is always a problem, when a roadway is riddled with potholes, speed is the thing that will make it harder to spot them, harder to drive defensively and if you hit one, will cause you to lose control. Slow down.
3. **SPACE CUSHION** - Leave plenty of distance between your vehicle and those in front of you. This will give you room to maneuver and will also give you time and space to see potholes.
4. **FOCUS**- Be aware of what's around you – pedestrians, other vehicles, poles, trees, etc. before you try to steer around a pothole.
5. **EASY DOES IT** - If you have to drive over a pothole, allow the wheel to roll freely into the hole, go easy and stay in control with both hands on the wheel.
6. **CHECK YOUR PRESSURE** – Just like in summer, it is important to check your tire pressure regularly in winter to ensure that your tires are working optimally. Under or over inflation can cause decreased performance and make your vehicle a lot harder to handle in tough spots.
7. **IF THE WORST HAPPENS** - If your vehicle sustains damage or you think it has, take precautions and stop in a safe place – pull over into a parking lot or well off the roadway before investigating. If you suspect serious damage, call for help. **DO NOT DRIVE A DAMAGED VEHICLE.** Take pictures of the damage, the pothole (when it is safe) and any other evidence you might need to support and document a damage claim.



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