

4WD/AWD vs. Snow Tires Forum

Dear NETS Members,

January 12, 2011

Ben Edelman of Lafarge has a question concerning the use of snow tires vs. all-wheel drive. His full question is below.

Page | 1 Responses follow Ben's question.

Thank you to those of you who provided responses.

Please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Yours truly,

Jack

J. M. Hanley
Executive Director
Network of Employers for Traffic Safety
314-680-3293

Question

I have a question I want to pose to the Forum regarding All Wheel Drive on vehicles.

Numerous companies responded in the *Use of Snow Tires* Forum that they automatically ensure snow-belt employees are given cars with AWD. **My question is: What is the reasoning behind giving AWD vehicles to employees? Is anyone aware of any research indicating improved safety from the use of AWD?**

Also, there had been a rumor that AWD cars can actually decrease safety by making drivers overly confident in inclement conditions, causing them to take unnecessary and ill-advised risks during such weather. Has anyone deliberately chosen not to get AWD vehicles for this or a similar reason?

Thanks!

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Responses

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		<i>What is the reasoning behind giving AWD vehicles to employees? Is anyone aware of any research indicating improved safety from the use of AWD?</i>	<i>There had been a rumor floating around that AWD cars can actually decrease safety by making drivers overly confident in inclement conditions, causing them to take unnecessary and ill-advised risks during such weather. Has anyone deliberately chosen not to get AWD vehicles for this or a similar reason?</i>
1	Anonymous	We do not restrict the use of AWD vehicles.	
2	AstraZeneca Kimberly.Jamme Kimberly.Jamme@astrazeneca.com	We allow employees in snow-belt regions the opportunity to select an AWD car.	I am not aware of any research showing improved safety from the use of AWD. We are not planning to remove AWD vehicles from our selector.
3	GE Healthcare Jeri Hall Jeri.Hall@med.ge.com	We do not automatically provide AWD for snow belt area employees. It is a vehicle available to order if they desire. The reason we give them that option is for stability and control in areas where snow is heavy/road conditions could be bad. Most of our employees have the minivan due to parts/tools they have to carry, and they need that cargo space. However, if they need the AWD, the option is an xxx which is smaller. We do have some areas that have requested snow tires and it is manager approval required. We do encourage them not to purchase snow tires, as the tires provided on our vehicles are all weather tires but their manager can approve them if needed.	I have not seen any research on whether or not AWD is safer. I personally believe it is how the vehicle is driven, or driver skills, that is the issue. In researching the accidents we have had that were weather related - there is not a trend that shows AWD vehicles have reduced accidents. We rely on our employees to report "near miss" events that include vehicles - and to date, we have had only a few reports that AWD helped avoid an accident. We have had the xxx AWD for 3 years and only a small # of people in our fleet have them (approx 200 out of 5000 in the fleet), so not a lot of data, but so far no trend that would say it gives the driver a false sense of security or reduces accidents.

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		<i>What is the reasoning behind giving AWD vehicles to employees? Is anyone aware of any research indicating improved safety from the use of AWD?</i>	<i>There had been a rumor floating around that AWD cars can actually decrease safety by making drivers overly confident in inclement conditions, causing them to take unnecessary and ill-advised risks during such weather. Has anyone deliberately chosen not to get AWD vehicles for this or a similar reason?</i>
4	Novo Nordisk Donna Bibbo dbib@novonordisk.com	It's probably all a matter of perception, but if my drivers feel safe that's exactly what I want. So not only do we give snow belt drivers the choice of AWD/4WD vehicles, we'll put snow tires on those vehicles also.	
5	Pfizer Teri Snow theresa.l.snow@pfizer.com	We have moved away from giving our colleagues AWD vehicles unless it is approved by their manager. We used to give them out automatically, now we rely on solid business need. Snow tires are approved in given environments where the terrain is more mountainous or where weather dictates the need.	I'm not aware of any research around AWD actually making a driver safer. Bottom line is that it's about the driver behavior and not so much the vehicle.
6	Roche Diagnostics Francine Seguin francine.seguin@roche.com	AWD vehicles are permitted only for snow belt areas and hilly regions and need to be approved by 2 directors.	

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		<i>What is the reasoning behind giving AWD vehicles to employees? Is anyone aware of any research indicating improved safety from the use of AWD?</i>	<i>There had been a rumor floating around that AWD cars can actually decrease safety by making drivers overly confident in inclement conditions, causing them to take unnecessary and ill-advised risks during such weather. Has anyone deliberately chosen not to get AWD vehicles for this or a similar reason?</i>
7	State Farm Margit Alderson margit.alderson.hrd5@statefarm.com	<p>We are not convinced of the benefits of all wheel drive. While it might help with traction to get moving, the benefits of stability control and a set of snow tires in areas with adverse weather conditions is preferred. Our local transportation would approve the purchase of snow tires for our drivers.</p> <p>We do have all wheel drive vehicles in our fleet and they comprise less than 1% of our fleet and require Vice President approval. We have a few in the states of Colorado, California, Washington, Montana, Alaska, Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming.</p>	
8	Union Gas Kevin Wright KPWright@uniongas.com	<p>4WD is an upgrade from our standard fleet options and is based on geographical driving conditions. Individual Manager's justification is required for the upgrade to 4WD and is generally approved for Roles operating in prolonged snowy conditions and on the pipeline right-of-ways.</p>	

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