

JAY JOHNSON & ASSOCIATES, LLC

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SAFETY

COMPLIANCE BITES



Managing Compliance During the Winter

The winter season is here, which means more people on the road, heavier traffic, earlier darkness, and changing weather conditions. For commercial drivers, these shifts make it even more important to stay compliant and safe. Managing your Hours of Service (HOS) and Electronic Logging Device (ELD) requirements, understanding Adverse Driving Conditions exemptions, performing proper pre-trip inspections, and staying in touch with your dispatcher are essential steps to keep the season smooth and stress-free.

During the winter, Hours of Service regulations remain the same. Whether you're driving interstate or intrastate, HOS rules still apply. It's a good idea to plan your routes carefully, keeping winter weather and holiday traffic in mind. Here are some helpful tools for safe and compliant route planning:

- **National Weather Service (NWS)** at [weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov) provides real-time weather updates that drivers can access via app or website.
- **Weather and Traffic Apps** like Waze, The Weather Channel, and AccuWeather allow drivers to check instant weather changes and road conditions, and Waze even offers real-time alerts shared by other users. Make sure you set up weather alerts.
- **U.S. DOT Road Conditions** at [fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/trafficinfo/) provides state-specific road updates, including closures and detours.
- **Google and Apple Maps** offer traffic layers that show congestion, accidents, and weather disruptions along your route.

No matter how well you plan, unexpected conditions may still arise. Adverse Driving Conditions refer to dangerous weather or road situations that were unknown before starting the trip. This exemption grants drivers extra time to safely complete their trip. Here's how it works:

- **Interstate (49 CFR 395.1(b)(1))**: Federal HOS regulations allow an extra 2 hours to safely finish the trip when facing adverse conditions, extending both the 11-hour driving limit and 14-hour duty window.
- **Intrastate (13 CCR 1201)**: State-specific rules permit up to 2 additional hours if adverse conditions prevent safe travel within standard time limits. This extra time can be used to reach a safe location.

Conditions that may qualify include unexpected snow, heavy rain, road closures, or major accidents.

NOTE: Traffic during a known storm or traffic during peak traffic times are not eligible for Adverse Driving Conditions.

If you encounter such conditions, contact your company's dispatcher, as they are responsible for approving the use of this exemption when it meets the criteria or for providing alternate solutions. Once approved, ensure that your ELD is accurately logged with a brief description to reflect the conditions.

In fall and winter it is even more crucial to have a thorough pre-trip inspection. Always check your brakes, tire treads, and antifreeze levels to minimize the risk of breakdowns. Additionally, consider carrying emergency supplies, such as blankets, food, water, and extra warm clothing. These items are important if you're stranded in severe conditions and can make all the difference in ensuring your safety. The winter season brings unique challenges for drivers, making compliance and safety more important than ever. By managing HOS regulations, using route planning tools, and carrying essential emergency supplies, you can stay prepared for winter travel.

For questions or further guidance, reach out to **Jay Johnson Associates, LLC**. Our team is here to support you in staying safe and compliant this holiday season.