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**November 2009 e-newsletter****Give Your Vehicle a Check-up****Before Winter Weather Hits**

Perilous winter road conditions contribute to dangerous auto accidents annually in the Twin Tiers. You cannot prevent snow and ice, but you can take preventative measures to make your vehicle safer for passengers and yourself.

Your car should have a check-up before the storms start. Preventative maintenance can keep your vehicle running well through our long, cold winters.

The following checklist was created by Ziff Law attorney [Adam M. Gee](#), who recently published his first book, "[Would You Ride Your Motorcycle Naked?](#)" a guide to motorcycle insurance in New York and Pennsylvania.

**Winter Car Care Checklist**

**Antifreeze:** This will keep vital fluids in your car from freezing during cold winter storms. Make sure your antifreeze is fresh and filled.

**Brakes:** Your brakes should be checked about every 5,000 miles. Anti-lock Braking Systems get a real workout in snowy and icy conditions, so immediately address any ABS warning lights on your dashboard.

**Defroster:** Confirm that your defrosting system is in its best possible shape. Give yourself enough extra time on cold mornings to properly defrost your windows.

**Exhaust system:** With the car windows closed, and snow or ice possibly shrouding your car, noxious fumes could circulate into your car's interior if your exhaust system is not working properly.

**Heater:** Your car's heater could save your life in the event you become stranded. If it's not working properly, get it fixed fast.

**Hazard lights:** If your car becomes disabled and your hazard lights aren't working, winter conditions could prevent other motorists from seeing your vehicle until it is too late to avoid a collision.

**Headlights, turning signals, etc.:** Have a friend stand outside your car and help check all of your lights.

**Oil:** Regular oil changes will ensure that your engine runs well at any time of year. Some vehicles require different oil in cold conditions. Follow the manufacturer's advice for proper weight and type of oil.

**Thermostat:** This little gauge helps regulate your engine temperature. Cars have been known to blow engines when their thermostats fail. Always pay attention to your temperature gauge and have it checked by a mechanic if something seems awry.

**Law 'Tech': Exciting Concepts Simplify Cases**

Recently on the [NY Injury Law Blog](#), we have posted news about how new technology is helping to resolve personal injury cases quickly and efficiently. Here is a summary of two new developments:

**Testimony by Skype:** A New York City judge recently allowed the use of [Skype](#), an Internet phone and video service, to take testimony in a personal injury case. The plaintiff, who had returned to his native India, was able to give testimony without traveling back to the United States, and the case was settled swiftly and cheaply.

"No more wasting time. All we need is a Web cam and Skype," Queens Supreme Court Justice Martin Ritholtz said. "It's so easy technologically."

**Free AccidentSketch service:** A free online resource offers accident victims a simple yet precise way to create a visual and written accident description.

[AccidentSketch](#) has pre-drawn road elements and vehicles you can drag and drop onto a grid, creating a virtual drawing of the accident circumstances.

You can select your type of car and color, even enter license plate numbers. Road features include signs, traffic lights, brake marks and more. Once you have created an illustration, AccidentSketch offers a text-entry option, so that you can include a written description of the accident.

**Life Jackets Mandatory November through May**

- New York law extends period that life-saving devices must be worn.

I have handled too many tragic boating accident cases during my years as a personal injury lawyer. The experience has brought me to favor any new laws that contribute to boating safety.

In September, New York became the first state with a comprehensive life jacket law that will save lives during some of the most dangerous months of the year for boaters. The waters in our region are colder and deadlier during the winter and early spring.

Life jackets are now required for EVERYONE in all small pleasure craft during November through May, the six coldest months of the year.

Capsized boaters drown faster in chilly water. According to an Associated Press story on the new law, "Falling into cold water can trigger shock, disorientation or gasping and inhaling water. Immersion can lead to hypothermia and passing out."

Starting this month, anyone out on the water in a craft less than 21 feet long must wear a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device. The rule, in effect through May 1, applies to kayaks, canoes and motorboats on lakes, waterways and the ocean.

Flaunting the new law could bring boaters a fine of \$100 to \$250.

The Finger Lakes is the most beautiful lakes region in the world. after all (see my blog post, "[Finger Lakes Tops List of World's Best Lakeside Retreats](#)"). We have a unique and wonderful access to an incredible natural resource here, and the new life jacket law is an added incentive to stay safe on the water.

- James B. Reed.

**Make Orange a November Fashion Statement**

New York is one of the few states that **does not** require hunters to wear "blaze" or "hunter" orange. A state study found, however, that wearing the eye-popping color decreased the risk of hunters being mistaken for a game animal by 700%!

Please hunt smart and safely this year. Wear orange!

Best regards,

Your Friends At The Ziff Law Firm