



When the weather looks like this, it is pretty comforting to have 4-wheel drive, or all-wheel-drive. (Mark Rackay/Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

# Two Four On All



# Two, Four, Or All

## Picking how to drive this winter

I acquired my first car at the ripe old age of 16, and it was a two-door Ford Galaxy 500. I don't want to say it was old, however, it was probably left over from the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Having my own car meant that I could go hunting, fishing, hiking, and camping in the mountains, anytime I wanted. Previously, I was always dependent upon someone driving me there, or borrowing my grandfather's car. I must say, he was not enthusiastic about loaning out his car for an extended fishing trip in the mountains.

Now days, people have RVs, camp trailers and pickup campers to haul all their outdoor gear around. Those of us who grew up poor only had camping cars with a backseat.

A properly outfitted backseat contained hunting gear, fishing rods and tackle boxes, food, drink, sleeping bags, tent, extra clothes, survival kit, and at least a hundred pounds of garbage from previous trips. If a fallen tree was blocking the road, you could produce a chain saw, double bit axe, two chains, and a come-along to clear the tree.

People ask me quite often about the necessity of four-wheel drive (4WD) and the newer all-wheel drive (AWD) vehicles



### Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

and what I think is necessary for outdoor recreation. Some folks think that regular two-wheel drive (2WD) vehicles are fine, as long as they have good tires.

I would start out by saying that 2WD is fine for around town, getting back and forth to work and such, but a no-go for serious mountain time. If you get stuck in snow or mud with 2WD, you are pretty much going to wait for the tow truck to show up. You may be able to jack it up and put on skid chains, but likely, you are going to sit for a while.

We all have been on the top of some rugged pass, where we crawled up there in 4-Low, and glad to have made it over the boulders and logs in the trail, just to see some guy in a Toyota Camry come driving by. While the 2WD may get you there, and if it's all you got, it is not optimum.

Some cars now come with

full time AWD. Full time AWD delivers power to all four wheels always, but it does not have the low-range torque found in regular 4WD vehicles. We see a lot of these cars on the roads here in Colorado.

AWD vehicles fill a niche for people who use the car as a daily driver, but want to recreate on the weekends with the same car. These cars do reasonably well in the snow, and on moderately rough roads but lack the suspension and ground clearance for the really rough stuff. Again, you need to balance your needs when choosing a vehicle.

AWD also comes in an automatic version. This convenience allows you to "set it and forget it." The vehicle monitors the tire traction while in 2WD, and automatically shifts into 4WD when one of them begins to slip. This setting is ideal when roads have patchy snow and ice, or any other combination of conditions when a tire could suddenly slip.

This brings us to standard 4WD vehicles, and these come with two settings; high and low. In high range setting, you can travel at normal speeds. I use this setting on my truck when roads are snowy and icy. I also use it on trails that involve some climbing because my back wheels spin easily from a lack of weight in

the truck bed.

The low range setting of 4WD is for the serious stuff. Deep sand, mud, snow, river crossings, climbing steep terrain, or descending steep downhills and all made for 4-low. You must keep your speeds down when using 4-low as you are not actually gripping the road any better, but you are applying more torque to that grip.

If you are in 4-low and notice you are starting to exceed 10 to 15 mph, chances are your vehicle can handle the trail in 4-high without any issue. I like to consider 4-low is to get me out of tricky situations, and save it as a last resort.

You should never travel in 4WD on flat, smooth, dry roads, as it will damage your drive train. Those vehicles with an automatic setting can be driven on these types of roads but it may cost you some gas mileage. Best to check with your dealer or mechanic about the settings on your vehicle.

Keep in mind that whether you choose AWD or 4WD, all of Newton's Law of physics still applies; especially the one about an object in motion has a tendency to stay in motion unless an outside force interferes. That outside force is an icy road. Sliding sideways down the highway, with a

full view of the proceedings, and you are no longer the driver; you are a passenger. Yes, winter fun time is coming.

We have all been on Monarch Pass in the winter, crawling along on a snow packed road, when here comes the big 4WD truck, smoking by you like you were standing still. Remember, 4WD is for traction to get you moving, but does absolutely nothing for you when you have to stop. Always slow down as the weather worsens or the terrain of your trail gets dicey.

My Ford camping car served me well for several years. One day, it died, probably of natural causes. I was then forced to join the "car payment" club and purchase a 4WD truck. That was 15 trucks ago and I still drive a truck. Guess I not happy driving anything else.

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