

What Was I Thinking?

BY ANONYMOUS

It's hard to believe, but summer is behind us and boy will I miss it. I really enjoyed getting out of the house and working in the yard; although my yard doesn't show it; playing golf, although my score doesn't show it, and having plenty of daylight to do the things after work without being rushed to get it in before the sun goes down.

On the bright side, the fall and winter months offer lots to look forward to. I enjoy watching football, going snow skiing or snowboarding, driving in the mountains and looking at all the trees and leaves turning colors, and of course playing golf. My only problem is that I still try to accomplish as much in the fall and winter as I did in the summer. I don't know about you, but I just can't seem to get it all done; however, it's not from a lack of trying. I'm the type of guy that thinks I can do anything and often pushes the envelope in order to get everything done.

A great example of this was a ski trip that I took with my and my wife's sister's family. Normally, every Christmas vacation we try to go skiing in the Poconos, which is about a three- and-a-half hour drive from my in-laws house (where we usually celebrate the holidays). Unfortunately last year, the day we were planning on going skiing, they were calling for a blizzard. I'm not the sharpest bowling ball on the rack, so I looked at this as a chance to get some fresh powder. A little snow was not going to deter me ... we were going skiing! I failed to utilize good risk management when I decided to take the family out in a blizzard. I didn't think about how my decision would possible affect the safety and lives of 10 other people.

We headed out about 4 a.m. (what a great idea) in two cars. I was driving our van and my wife was driving our other car. My first mistake was allowing my wife to drive in the dark ... she has trouble seeing at night. We were on the road heading north when I decided to turn on the radio to listen to the forecast (a little late ... you think?). They were calling for snow and lots of it up and down the East Coast. My thought was, great since we were going skiing; never giving any thought to the return trip home. The trip up was great ... little to no traffic.

We were there just in time to get in a full day of skiing. I picked this particular ski slope because they did not offer night skiing and I did not want to be tempted to stay too long. It started snowing around 9 a.m. and had gotten really bad around lunchtime. I still wasn't too concerned but did start to question my decision to go

skiing. We continued skiing and around 5 p.m. we were all a little tired. As we took a brief rest in the chalet, we noticed it was becoming dark and snowing sideways with little visibility.

We hit the road heading home around 5:30 p.m. in a driving snow storm ... another bad decision on my part. It took almost two-and-a-half hours to get off the back roads and onto the interstate — normally a 45-minute ride. By this time, the snow was so deep I could barely see where I was going. When we finally reached the interstate, the roads were not much better. Tire tracks identified where we were supposed to drive since you couldn't see the lines on the highway ... this was not good ... the next five or so hours seemed like we were traveling in slow motion. Not only was I having trouble seeing the road, I had a car full of backseat drivers and my wife (who had trouble

seeing at night) was driving behind me. Between trying to stay focused on the road, listening to the backseat drivers and everyone calling my cell phone to see if we were okay, I didn't have time to drift off.

We finally made it home after midnight ... safe and sound. The next morning when I awoke, I questioned (albeit too late) my decision to go skiing. I was able to quickly answer myself with a resounding NO ... shouldn't have done it! Even though we all made it home safe and sound, I think if I had to do it all over again, we would have stayed home and enjoyed each other's company around a roaring fire, instead of risking our lives and limbs to go skiing. Too often we don't think about others who rely on us to make good risk management decisions.

Each year, thousands of people take chances doing things that may not be safe or are very risky. When they look back, after the fact, they question why they actual did it. As we enter the winter season, we all need to make sure we look at what we are doing and ensure we are not only prepared to do the activity, but that it is the right thing to do. Many of you will be hitting the road for a holiday vacation. Now is the time to take a look at your car and make sure it can make the trip. Take a good look at your tires, lights, belts and cooling system to be sure you're prepared for the road. Don't forget your survival kit: blankets, phone charger, flashlight w/extra batteries, first aid kit, high-calorie, non-perishable food, extra clothing, sack of sand or kitty litter, jumper cables, ice scraper, snow shovel and waterproof matches.



Last, but not least, ensure you're ready for the trip. Did you get the proper rest; do you have a backup plan and does someone else know where you are going? Don't let your guard down just because you're driving on roads that you have traveled many times before. This goes for all activities that you'll be doing. Make sure you take a good look at what it takes to do it safely. Something that seems as safe as going fishing in a lake could have huge consequences if you are not properly prepared. Remember, if you see someone doing something unsafe, step up and get involved ... be a good wingman. 🦋

