THULE K-23 K-SUMMIT SNOW CHAINS REVIEW, INSTALL AND TEST

Having a lowered coupe with fat summer tires is not the proper setup for winter/snow driving. However, given the weather conditions in my country, I wanted to have a backup solution in case I got stranded one day due to snow, icy roads etc. I have researched a lot for a suitable solution and unfortunately, the options are limited. Excluding the purchase of dedicated winter tires, I went ahead and tried various types of snow chains. All of them were rated for my tire size; 255/35/18 (Rear).

Disclaimer:

I performed the tests on empty road with a friend with his own 4x4 as backup. I am not responsible for any damages/injuries that may occur if you try this on your own.

Setup:

BMW E46 320CI

Bilstein Sport Struts/Shocks with Eibach Pro-Kit Springs / Hotchkiss Antiroll bars @ medium stiffness front / stiffest rear

225/40/18 front - 255/35/18 Rear tires / Goodyear Eagle F1 Asymmetric II (These are max performance summer tires, not intented to be driven on below 0 weather or snow/ice).

Specifically the following results occured:

- No chains: NO TRACTION, even with a slight layer of snow on 1 wheel only, the car could not move an inch forward or would actually go the other way if going uphill.

- Generic traditional type snow chains: Will not clear tire/shock or tire/fender, unable to properly mount them because of 0 clearance.

- Security Chain Company SuperZ6 Snow chains: Will clear both sides but very difficult to mount due to the hands unable to go inside the wheel well to wrap them around the tire. Add snow, freezing temperatures and this task becomes extremely difficult.

- Thule K-Summit snow chains. SUCCESS in all aspects, read the following review.

Manufacturers Link here

The concept of these snow chains is to use them on 0-clearance vehicles, where access to the inner side of the tire is impossible. This setup utilizes a mechanism that attaches to one of the wheel bolts (adapters & spacers provided for various sizes) and then pushes the chains on the tire using a ratchet. Thule's video on their side is much more easy to understand from the link above.

Anyway, I got these chains a few days ago just before new year and finally got the chance to test them. Extreme weather conditions covered all mountain roads with a nice layer of snow/ice.

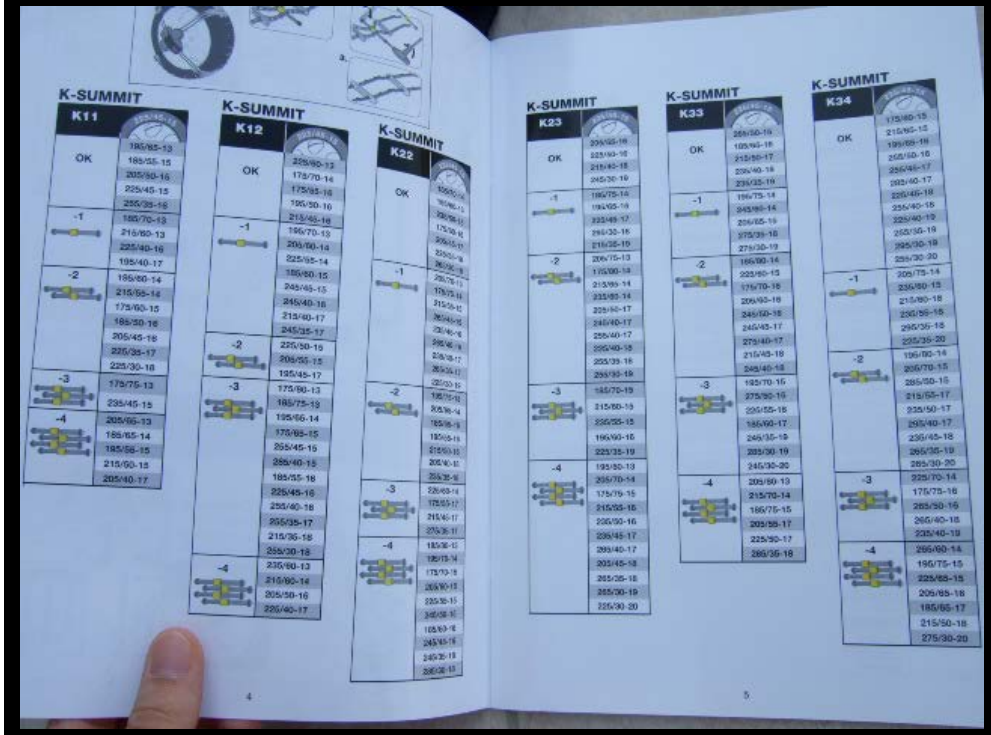
The initial test/fit/adjustment was done at my driveway as we do not to find out that the chains don't fit after we become stranded in the snow.

Packaging: With reflective stripe too

Unzip:

Contents: Tools for mounting/adjustment, adaptors for various wheel bolts, spacers/bolts for weird rims, waterproof manual, repair hooks. The little things with the green plastic in the middle are the adjustment screws. For various tire sizes, you need to remove some or add, the manual lists all tire sizes that can be used with the K-23.

As seen below, it tells you how many screws to remove.



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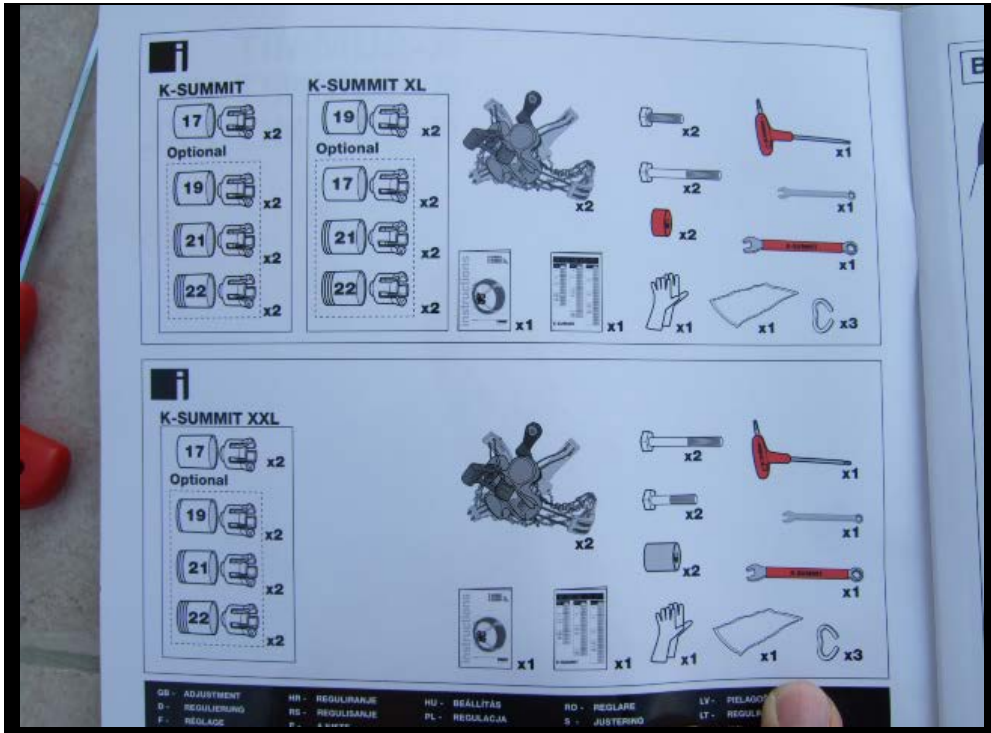


Tools are provided to remove these adjustment screws. All of them are threaded with loctite blue and were difficult to remove.

The mechanism that attaches to the wheel bolt

With the pre-installed spacer + adaptor. I used the default setup for my alloys.

The mechanism basically grabs the wheel bolt as you tighten the bolt shown above.

Ratchet mechanism to push the chains on the tire

Pay attention!

Test fitting

Without the supplied spacer (obviously don't use that on the security bolt)

Tested the shorter red spacer, would not clear, reverted to the bigger one (pre-installed)

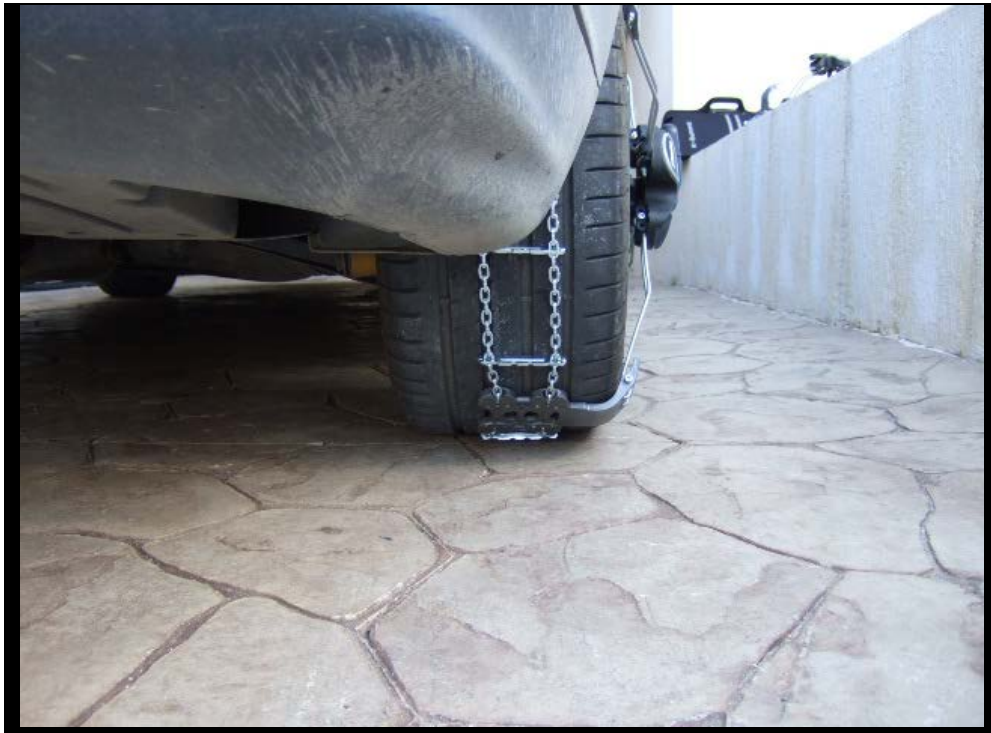
Grab the chains as seen below and slide them over the wheel. Notice the orientation of the ratcheting / securing mechanisms.

Use the supplied wrench to tighten the bolt

No contact with the alloy, perfect fit.

Once the bolt is tight, start ratcheting until the red stitch shows, this means to stop ratcheting.

Drive a couple of meters forward/revers and the chains will automatically slide around the tire and center themselves. Total time: 1.5 Minutes per side!

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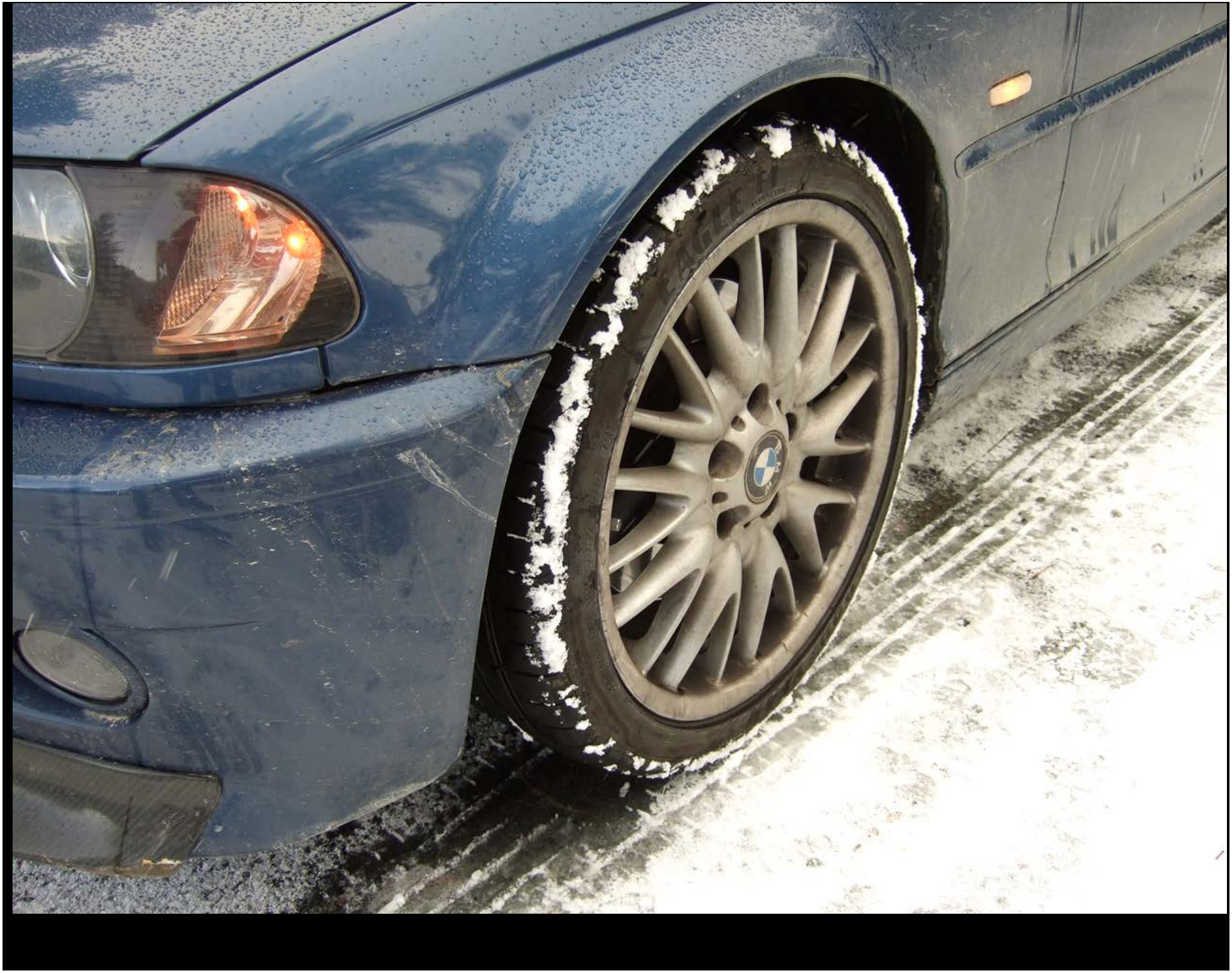
To release, just press the red lever and the springs will pop out, relieving tension and allowing you to remove the securing bolt.

Forgot that, they supply a mat to protect your knees while working :)

And the real action (with Traction!) :

Chains installed in seconds and performed flawlessly. I had traction and stopping cabability. Not even the ASC seemed to activate and the noise/vibrations are very low. Definitely reccommended to get out of harsh road conditions.

Front wheels basically only for steering.




EAGLE F1
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Here's a picture of the road too:

And of the backup vehicle!

Review Part 2:

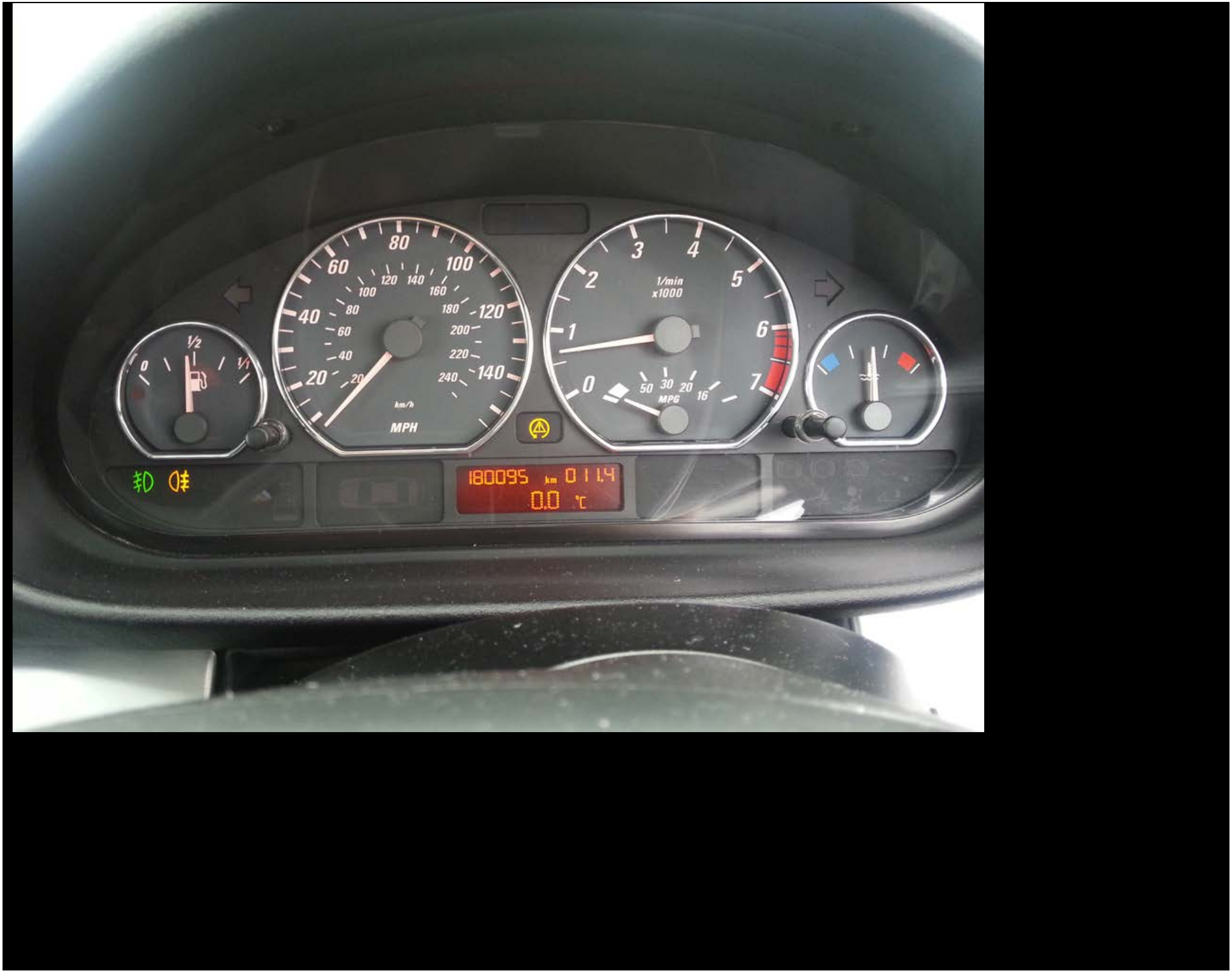
2nd Visit to the mountains!

Beautiful scenery


320 Ci


320 Ci

ASC = Off, Fogs = On, 0 degrees = Black Ice + Very hard snow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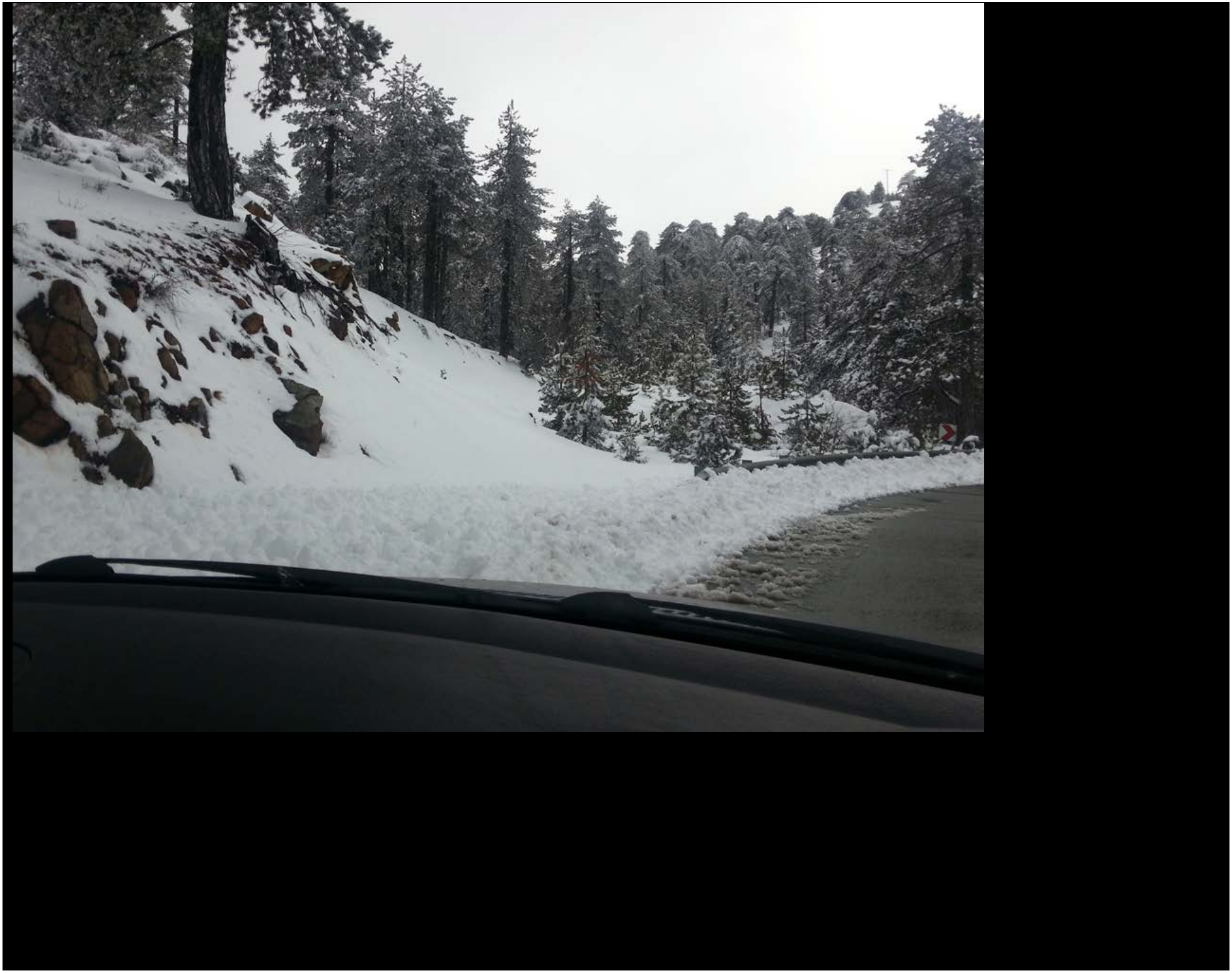
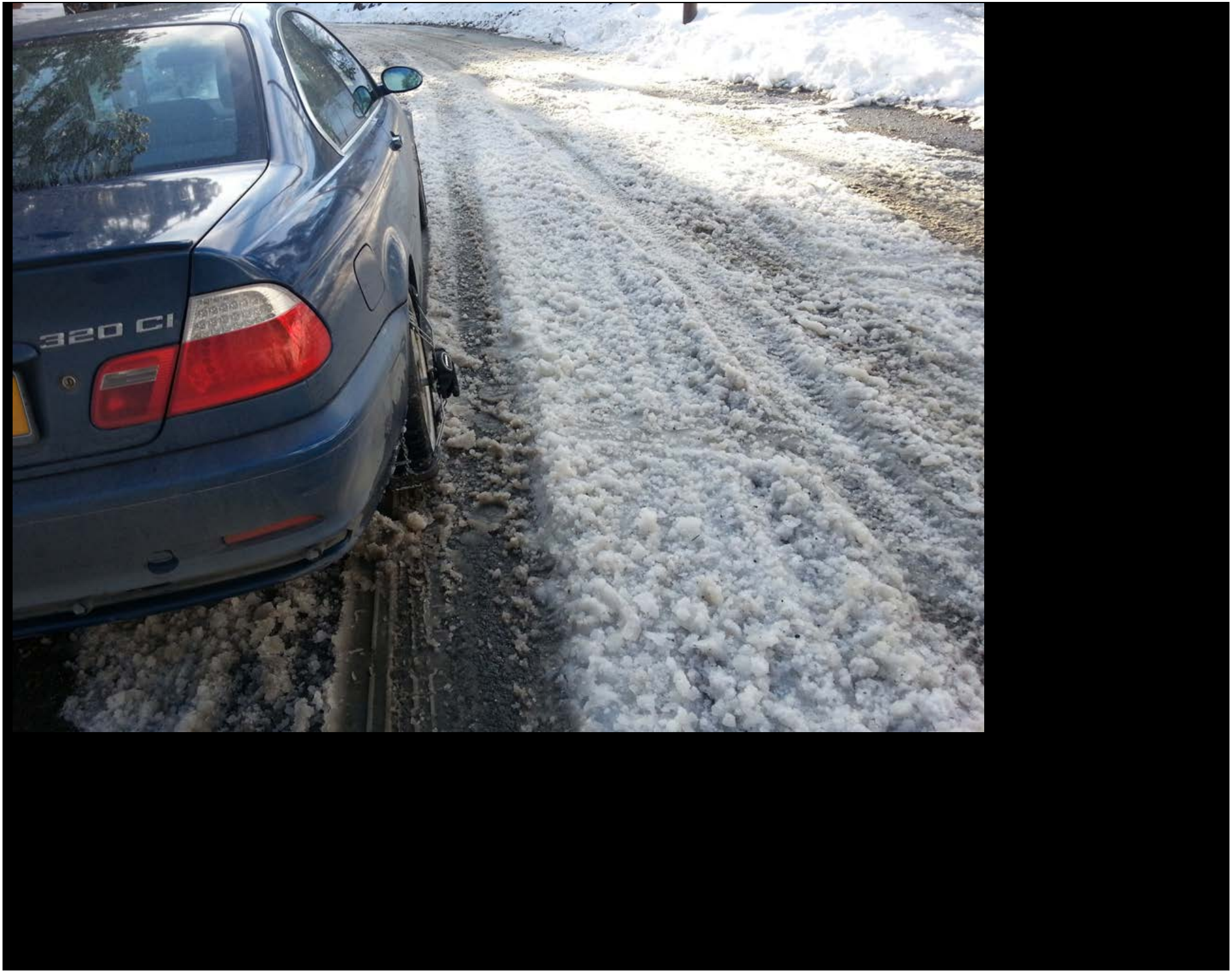


Followed some 4x4... Without the chains, I could not get any traction to move an inch. Braking was ineffective.


320 CI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After driving on mixed surfaces, I also checked the composite part of the chains for wear and tear. Thankfully nothing to see, apart from some surface scratches


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