

Best Practice Guide

Bad Weather



When The Weather Turns Bad

Heavy rain, snow, ice, fog, high winds and sleet are all common conditions which can make driving extremely hazardous.

Where possible driving in these conditions should be avoided, but this is not always an option, especially as bad weather can be unexpected.

There are many steps you can take to improve your safety when the weather is bad, starting before you even get in your vehicle.

Check Your Vehicle

- Has been maintained / serviced and you have a good battery. Your battery has to work much harder in the winter (working lights and wipers, for example) and can fail completely with hardly any warning.
- Tyres have a good tread depth and are inflated correctly, including the spare.
- Cooling system contains antifreeze at the correct strength.
- Windscreen wipers and washers are working properly - in cold temperatures use high strength screen-wash.
- Lights are clean and working.

Check The Weather Conditions

- Look at local and national TV and Radio for travel and weather information.
- See that all your vehicle windows, mirrors and lights are clear from mist, frost and snow. Snow and ice reduce what you can see, and can be dangerous to other road users as it falls off your vehicle.

In Extreme Weather Conditions Such As Falling Snow

- Ask yourself is my journey essential?
- Check to see if you have a full tank of fuel.
- Let someone know your destination and your expected time of arrival.
- Take a mobile phone if you have one, but remember you could break down in a 'dead area', so take warm high visibility clothing, hot drinks, food, boots, a torch and shovel as well - it could be a long walk to a phone.

If You Are Out On The Roads In Poor Conditions

- Use the main roads which have been salted as much as possible. Map of routes that Councils salt are normally available on their websites.
- Allow extra time for your journey.
- Avoid the rush hour to help reduce congestion.

When Driving In Wintry Weather

- Drive according to the conditions - on treated and untreated roads.
- Reduce speed in poor visibility, where there is snow, or if ice may have formed.
- Use the highest gear possible to help keep control of the vehicle and avoid harsh braking and acceleration.
- Maintain larger safer stopping distances - two seconds between vehicles is for good conditions! A wet road surface means you'll take twice as long to stop, so you need to be at least four seconds behind the vehicle in front.
- Use dipped headlights in poor visibility and snow, so others can see you!
- Use rear fog lights in poor visibility but remember to switch them off when conditions improve.
- Watch out for other road users, including motorbikes, bicycles, pedestrians and children, who may also be having difficulties in the conditions.



If You Do Break Down

- If you get into trouble, stay with your vehicle if possible, until help arrives.
- If you do have to leave your vehicle, make yourself visible to others.
- If you have to abandon your vehicle, give local police the details and park safely to avoid obstruction to maintenance vehicles such as snow ploughs when they are trying to treat the roads.

Advice For Particular Weather Conditions

Fog is especially a danger in autumn and winter, and is a major cause of collisions:

- Slow down, keep your distance, and turn your lights on in fog.
- Drive very slowly using dipped headlights. Use fog lights if visibility is seriously reduced, but remember to switch them off when visibility improves.
- Don't hang on the tail lights of the vehicle in front - this gives you a false sense of security and means you may be driving too close.
- Don't speed up suddenly - even if it seems to be clearing, you can suddenly find yourself back in thick fog.

Ice, snow and slush drastically reduce the ability of your tyres to grip the road, which means that slowing down, speeding up, or changing direction all become hazardous.

The trick to driving in these conditions is to be as smooth as possible:

- Drive slowly, allowing extra room to slow down and stop.
- It can take ten times longer to stop in icy conditions than on a dry road.
- Use the highest gear possible to avoid wheel spin, manoeuvre gently, and avoid harsh braking and acceleration.
- To brake on ice and snow without locking your wheels, get into a low gear earlier than normal, allow your speed to fall, and use the brake pedal gently.
- If you skid, ease off the accelerator but do not brake suddenly.

Floods: It is best not to enter floodwater at all - if you can take an alternative route, do so. If you enter floodwater:

- Drive slowly in first gear, but keep the engine speed high by slipping the clutch - this will stop you from stalling.
- Go through the water one vehicle at a time.
- Avoid the deepest water, which is generally near the kerb. Don't attempt to cross if the water seems too deep. Watch others!
- Remember - test your brakes a few times after you are through the flood before you drive at normal speed.

Warning

Beware of 'aquaplaning' when roads are wet. This is caused when a layer of water builds up on the road surface and prevents the vehicle from responding to actions such as steering and braking.

Be equipped.

Always keep your vehicle maintained.

Drive at a suitable speed.

Watch out for debris after bad weather.

Ensure you look out for stranded vehicles.

Always listen to the weather forecast before setting off.

Try to increase your visibility to others.

High sided vehicles can be affected by strong wind.

Every journey should be planned in advance.

Remember to drive slowly, smoothly and steadily.