

Driving in Bad Weather



Driving through ice and snow

- Your stopping distance is increased ten times when driving in snow and ice
- Select second gear when pulling away, easing your foot off the clutch gently to avoid wheel-spin
- It is not always obvious that the road is icy. Look for clues such as ice on the pavement or on your windscreen. If your tyres are making virtually no noise on the road, it could be a sign that you are driving on ice
- Do not brake heavily – it will just lock your wheels and you will skid further, consider changing to a lower gear
- Clear any snow on the roof of the vehicle before you drive off. It can slip down over the windscreen and obscure your view
- In severe cold or snowy conditions, look out for winter service vehicles spreading salt or using snow ploughs. They will have flashing amber beacons and will be travelling at slower speeds – around 40 mph. Stay well back because salt or spray is thrown across the road. Don't overtake unless it is safe to do so – there may be uncleared snow on the road ahead

Driving in the rain

- When the road is wet, it can take twice as long to stop. So it makes sense to slow down and maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front
- If your vehicle loses its grip, or “aquaplanes” on surface water, take your foot off the accelerator to slow down. Do not brake or steer suddenly because you have no control of the steering or brakes

Floods

- Try to avoid driving through surface water as you might flood your engine. Avoid the deepest water which is usually nearest the kerb
- If you have to drive through floods, drive slowly using first gear and try to keep the engine revving at a high rate. Move forward continuously to avoid stalling the engine. If driving an automatic vehicle, engage and hold in a low gear
- Check your mirror and test your brakes after driving through water, to make sure they are still working properly



Be particularly vigilant for pedestrians and cyclists during winter weather. They may be more difficult to see and have trouble seeing you. When driving through puddles or wet areas, be prepared to slow down or stop to avoid splashing and causing distress.

Driving in windy weather

- High-sided vehicles and caravans are particularly affected by windy weather but strong gusts can also blow a smaller vehicle, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong crosswinds, or when passing bridges, high-sided vehicles or gaps in trees
- Be aware that other vehicles and debris could unexpectedly be blown into your pathway

Driving with a low sun

- Dazzle from sun can be dangerous. Always keep a pair of sunglasses (prescription if needed) in your vehicle for use in bright sunshine, especially if the sun is low or reflecting off a wet road
- Make sure you keep your windscreen clean



Driving in fog

- Drive very slowly using dipped headlights so other drivers can see you
- If it is really foggy (less than 100m visibility), then switch your fog lights and rear high-intensity lights on. Remember to switch them off when visibility improves
- Do not 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
- Fog is often patchy so try not to speed up as visibility improves. You could suddenly find yourself back in thick fog further up the road

Darker evenings and mornings

- Switch on lights as soon as it starts to get dark
- In urban areas use dipped headlights. Use full beam on other roads at night but dip them when there is someone in front or coming towards you
- Be aware that pedestrians are harder to spot in the dark and may not be visible until they are very close. In particular, take care when driving near schools and in residential areas, where children may be walking and cycling. These road users are very vulnerable as they are both hard to spot in the dark and may act unpredictably. Slow right down to 20mph. If you hit someone at this speed they have more than a 90% chance of survival, compared with about a 50/50 chance at 30mph



Useful Links

www.scotland.police.uk
www.trafficscotland.org
www.transportscotland.gov.uk
www.readyscotland.org
www.metoffice.gov.uk
www.aroundthecorner.org.uk



scan here for more info





A safer, less stressful journey

There are lots of simple things you can do to make your journey safer and less stressful during severe weather, such as checking your route for delays before you set out, taking an alternative route if you need to, taking an emergency kit and adapting your driving style to the conditions.

When freezing temperatures are forecast, you'll see our winter fleet out and about treating the roads with salt. Despite the high level of service provided, sudden weather changes occur and motorists should be aware that access to the road network may not always be possible.

For up-to-the-minute traffic information visit www.trafficscotland.org or download the Traffic Scotland mobile apps.

You can also listen to Traffic Scotland Radio or call the Traffic Customer Care Line on **0800 028 1414**.

Keep a close eye on weather information specific to your journey by using the Met Office website: www.metoffice.gov.uk. The Met Office issue warnings for rain, snow, wind, fog and ice based on the likelihood and potential impact of conditions.

Each warning has a colour:

Red (take action)

Amber (be prepared)

Yellow (be aware)

Before your journey

You should pay extra attention to planning your journey in bad weather. Before travelling you should:

- check the weather forecast and road conditions
- consider whether you need to travel right now or if you can wait until the weather improves
- consider alternative routes
- consider alternative modes of transport
- allow extra time for your journey
- ensure that your vehicle is ready for a journey in poor weather
- carry an emergency kit
- consider what changes you need to make to your driving style to suit the weather or conditions
- tell someone at your destination what time you expect to arrive
- visit the Traffic Scotland website to identify any problems on trunk roads

Before you set off on your journey

- It is vitally important to make sure your vehicle is adequately maintained and that brakes, tyres, lights, batteries, windscreens and wiper blades are in good condition
- Tyres are the only point of contact with the road and if they are worn or incorrectly inflated then they have less grip and can significantly increase stopping distances in the event of an emergency
- Tyres should also be checked for bulges, cuts or tears, which will weaken the tyre and potentially lead to a collision. The minimum legal tread depth is 1.6mm but this is the legal minimum and it must be remembered that tyres perform more efficiently with a greater depth of tread
- All windows should be demisted and fully cleared of any frost, snow or ice
- Check that wiper blades are not worn and are capable of clearing the windscreen correctly
- Check brakes, lights, oil and washer fluid levels (add winter screen wash to your washer bottle to stop the water from freezing)

Police travel advice

Transport Scotland, working in partnership with Police Scotland, has developed a severe weather information strategy to warn and inform road users when significant disruption to the road network is expected during extreme weather.

The advice and information service will commence when severe weather is forecast within Scotland. Forecast information will be provided in advance of and during any severe weather event.

The travel advice will relate to four specific stages, which will be adopted depending on the severity of the weather:

- **Normal operations** – No severe weather
- **Travel with caution** – Police are advising people that conditions for road travel may be hazardous and drivers should exercise extra caution
- **High risk of disruption for road journeys** – Police are advising that there is a high risk of disruption for road journeys. Travellers are likely to experience significant delays
- **Avoid travelling on the roads** – Police are advising drivers to avoid travelling on the roads. Travellers should be prepared to experience severe delays of several hours or more

This advice will be provided to road users through Transport Scotland's network of Variable Message Signs, the Traffic Scotland website (including the internet radio service), Twitter, smartphone applications, radio travel information broadcasts and the Traffic Scotland Customer Careline.



Emergency kits

Keep an emergency kit in the car:

- ice scraper and de-icer
- torch and spare batteries
- warm clothes and a blanket
- a pair of boots
- first-aid kit
- battery jump leads
- a shovel for snow
- food and a warm drink in a flask
- sunglasses in the glove box to help you see in low sun
- make sure your mobile phone is charged fully
- a map for any unplanned diversions



During your journey

Be aware of changing road and weather conditions – even if it is a road you use regularly.

Remember it is dangerous and illegal to use a hand-held mobile phone or device while driving.

You may need to change the way you drive in bad weather:

- reduce speed
- increase stopping distances
- avoid sudden acceleration and braking
- use dipped headlights
- take a break every two or three hours
- do not pass closed snow gates
- listen to radio travel bulletins
- observe information on Variable Message Signs

Watch out for locations where you may need to drive more carefully. Some common examples are:

- changes in road elevation or exposure
- where the road passes under or over a bridge
- things at the side of the road that shade the carriageway (e.g. trees, bridges or other structures)
- where there is less traffic use (e.g. slip roads)
- bends in the road where there is a greater risk of loss of control. Reduce your speed when approaching



During your journey remember this critical question:

If I had to brake suddenly in an emergency, could I stop safely within the distance I can clearly see ahead of me?