

Take care driving in wintry conditions

With wintry weather forecast, icy roads, sleet and snow could make driving conditions more difficult in some areas. Always adjust your driving according to the conditions and plan your journey. Reduce your speed and drive with extra care, even when roads have been gritted.

Drive to suit the conditions

During adverse weather, you should:

- clear ice and snow off all windows, lights and vehicle roof before you set off
- use at least dipped headlights in poor visibility
- leave extra space between you and other vehicles
- be extra cautious at road junctions where road markings may not be visible

Even after roads have been treated in winter, driving conditions may remain challenging, especially if the road location and layout mean there is a high risk of ice. Be aware that ice forms more easily on:

- hilly or exposed roads
- roads that pass under or over a bridge
- roads shaded by trees or buildings

Try not to brake suddenly in icy conditions – it may lock up the wheels and you could skid.

If you start to skid:

- release the brake pedal fully or ease off the accelerator
- steer into the skid
- as you straighten, steer back along the road

You can find out more about driving in wintry conditions at the page below:

Check and service your vehicle

You can reduce your chances of breaking down by regularly servicing your car. You should also:

- top up anti-freeze and screenwash
- check for wear and tear on wiper blades (replace them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows)
- make sure your battery is fully charged (batteries last between two and four years – replace yours if it's no longer reliable)
- keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level and check you have at least 1.6mm across the central three-quarters of the breadth of the tread and around the entire circumference

- wipe dirt and spray off headlamps and make sure all bulbs are working

Winter kit

During winter you are advised to carry a winter kit in your vehicle. It should include:

- ice scraper and de-icer
- torch and spare batteries (or a wind-up torch)
- warm clothes and blankets
- boots
- first aid kit
- jump leads for the car battery
- a shovel (if there's a chance of snow)
- road atlas
- sunglasses (the low winter sun and glare off snow can be dazzling)
- warning triangle

If you're planning a long trip or if severe weather is forecast, you may want to also have in your car:

- any medication you need to take regularly
- food and a thermos with a hot drink

Is your journey necessary?

You should always plan your journey and check the latest weather and travel advice.

If the conditions are bad, ask yourself whether you really need to travel – or if you can delay your journey until conditions improve.

If you must travel, plan your journey carefully.

Traffic information

However carefully you plan your journey, things can go wrong. An accident or bad weather could mean that a road is closed for a time.

You can get up-to-date traffic information at the following link:

If you find yourself on a stretch of road that is closed, stay in the car and listen to traffic news.

Driving and walking in flooded areas

Do not travel in heavy rainstorms unless absolutely necessary.

In flooded areas, drivers should not:

- enter flood water that is moving or is more than four inches deep
- under any circumstances, drive through fast-flowing water as the car

could be swept away

In more shallow but passable water:

- slow down
- avoid creating bow waves which can damage your car engine; and
- remember to test the brakes after leaving the water

Do not attempt to walk through flooded areas. Even shallow water moving fast can sweep you off your feet and there may be hidden dangers such as:

- open drains
- damaged road surfaces
- submerged debris; or
- deep channels which can result in serious injury or, in the worst cases, death

If you do become stranded in flood water and you feel there is a risk to life, dial 999 for emergency assistance.

More useful links

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