

Snow and ice amber weather warning – information and advice

Snow and icy roads could make conditions more difficult in some areas. Consider whether your journey is necessary, and if it is 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.

Weather warning

An amber [weather warning](#) for snow and ice has been sent out by the Met Office.

Weather warnings from the Met Office let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

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.

Emergency numbers

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901
- [Report a fallen tree or blocked road](#) – 0300 200 7891

Report an issue with ice or snow

If you want to report an issue with ice or snow, you can do so online at this link:

You can also report an issue by phone:

- DfI Roads Northern Division – 0300 200 7891 (emergency after hours 028

7035 3202)

- DfI Roads Southern Division – 0300 200 7892 (emergency after hours 028 3752 9500)
- DfI Roads Eastern Division – 0300 200 7893 (emergency after hours 028 9025 3000)
- DfI Roads Western Division – 0300 200 7894 (emergency after hours 028 8224 1999)

Roads 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 and roads information at the following link:

School closures

If schools are closed due to the weather, you can find information at this link:

Public transport

You can find the latest information about bus and rail services on the [Translink website](#).

Cold weather health advice

There is information about keeping warm, staying as healthy as possible, and checking in on elderly or vulnerable relatives, friends and neighbours during cold weather on this page:

Drive to suit the conditions

During adverse weather, you should:

- clear ice and snow off all windows, lights, number plate, and vehicle roof before you set off
- make sure the mirrors are clear and windows are de-misted thoroughly
- use at least dipped headlights in poor visibility
- keep well back from the road user in front
- be extra cautious at road junctions where road markings may not be visible
- be prepared for the road conditions to change over relatively short distances

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

You can find out more on the [vehicle maintenance page](#).

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)
- in-car phone charger
- warm clothes and blankets
- high-visibility vest or jacket
- boots
- first aid kit
- jump leads for the car battery
- empty fuel can
- a shovel (if there's a chance of snow)
- road atlas
- sunglasses (the low winter sun and glare off snow can be dazzling)
- two reflective warning triangles

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

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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[Advice on staying well during cold and flu season](#)

With flu levels having risen in recent weeks and many of us experiencing coughs and colds, there is some simple advice to get through winter. Everyone is reminded that hand hygiene and self-care are essential when preventing and managing colds and flu.

Advice if you're unwell

[Washing your hands](#) regularly will help prevent flu and other winter viruses spreading.

If you do become unwell with [flu](#) or flu-like symptoms, you should stay at home. Most cases of flu are likely to be mild and can be managed at home with over-the-counter medication from a [pharmacist](#).

You should:

- rest up
- drink plenty of fluids
- blow your nose – catch it, bin it, kill it
- wash hands regularly
- clean hard surfaces (such as door handles) frequently using your usual cleaning product

For most people it will have got better within a week – if not you should speak to [your GP](#).

Those in [‘at-risk’ groups](#) may be more likely to get a serious illness. They should contact their GP earlier for advice if they have a high temperature or shortness of breath.

Antibiotics

It's important to remember that a course of [antibiotics won't sort out your cold or flu](#). Cold and flu are viruses and antibiotics are useless against them.

Viral infections are very common and, as well as cold and flu, they can include many infections of the nose, sinuses, ears, throat and chest.

Most of these can be self-treated without the need for a visit to the doctor, and with no need for an antibiotic.

Get the flu vaccine

Getting the [free flu vaccine](#) is the single most important thing you can do to help protect yourself against flu.

Everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated against flu should see it as a positive step in protecting their health and the health of others around them.

Further information on how to help yourself stay well this winter is in the [stay well section](#).

More useful links

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[Forest visitors – pay attention to warning signs and take care](#)

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Take care when visiting a forest, as there are risks in a working woodland. It's important to be aware of the hazards to make sure forests can be enjoyed safely. Serious accidents can happen if attention isn't paid to warning signs.

Risks and hazards in forests

The forest is a natural environment and you should be prepared for:

- sudden changes in weather
- rugged terrain
- deep water
- hidden cliff edges

The forest is also a working environment and forest operations take place all year round. Work areas will be clearly signposted and you should obey signs to help your personal safety.

Warning signs are used to highlight dangers and risks, and diversions are put in place to avoid work sites because the heavy machinery used can be very dangerous.

Both felled timber and woodlands that are part-felled can pose dangers.

You can find further safety advice on the following page:

Instructions on site signs is for your protection – following these instructions will help make sure that a visit to the forest remains safe and enjoyable.

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Take measures to stop inching towards bad health

People are being asked to measure their waist size to see if they may be inching towards bad health. A waist size of 37 inches or more in men, and 32 inches or more in women, puts you at increased risk of obesity-related health problems.

Measuring waistline

It's important to spot the warning signs for being overweight or obese.

Many people don't measure their waistline correctly as they're unsure of where their waistline actually is.

It's not about the size of your trousers, it's the distance around your abdomen at roughly the halfway point between the bottom of your ribs and top of your hips – the belly button can be used as a good point to do it from.

Follow these steps to help you measure your waist correctly:

- get hold of a standard tape measure
- stand up straight and breathe out naturally
- find the bottom of your ribs and the top of your hips – your waist is halfway between the two
- keep the tape measure snug around your waist and write down the result

Health risks

Many people don't even realise that they are overweight or obese and are at increased risk of:

- coronary heart disease
- some cancers
- developing Type 2 diabetes

- poorer emotional/ psychological wellbeing and self-esteem, especially among young people

Eating more healthily and taking more exercise could help prevent these types of health problems in later life. You can get useful advice and information, including healthier recipes, on the pages below:

You can also get helpful tips and practical advice on how you can measure your waist and reduce your weight at the following link:

Small changes can make a difference

Small changes are easier to make and can add up to make a big difference. Every small step will help keep a healthy weight and improve health and wellbeing, for example:

- having smaller portions
- thinking about what you're buying in the supermarket
- swapping fatty foods for healthier options
- saying 'no thanks' to seconds or the children's leftovers
- going for a walk instead of watching TV

Daily exercise

Watching what you eat isn't the only way to prevent becoming overweight or obese. It's important to also be physically active. The reality is that the majority of us are not getting the 30 minutes of activity we need most days of the week.

Walking is one of the simplest forms of exercise. It doesn't cost you anything and has many health benefits. Walking at a brisk pace can:

- make you feel good
- reduce anxiety
- help you sleep better
- reduce blood pressure
- help you manage your weight

For children and young people, 60 minutes of activity every day is recommended.

You can find out more at the following link:

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Get help to develop skills and gain qualifications

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No matter what stage you are at in your career, skills and qualifications will improve your chances. Find out what options are available to help you develop the skills you need.

Skills throughout your life

Employers look for skills at all levels and you can develop them throughout your life.

Whether you have just left full-time education or want to improve your current prospects, you can get the skills and qualifications you need to achieve your full potential and to support local businesses and the economy.

Options include:

How to get help

You can find out what programmes and assistance is available to improve your skills by visiting the page below:

You can chat online to a professionally-qualified careers adviser to get impartial advice about your career options:

You can also get information by telephone:

Employers can also get advice and guidance on the range of skills and training programmes available to support local companies.

More useful links

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