

Severe Weather Driving

- Department for Transport statistics show that during 2020 there were 1,460 reported road deaths in the UK, with 115,584 injuries.
- One in three road traffic collisions involve people driving as part of their employment, which results in duty of care implications and costs organisations time and money.
- Driving at this time of year is even more hazardous so follow these simple tips to make your winter journey as safe as possible.
- Is your journey necessary? If the Emergency Services are advising against travelling, consider postponing your journey until the conditions improve.



Check your vehicle:

- Has been maintained/serviced and you have a good battery. Your battery has to work much harder in the winter and can fail completely with hardly any warning.
- Tyres have adequate tread depth and are inflated correctly (including the spare).
- Cooling system contains antifreeze at the correct strength and is at the correct level.
- Windscreen wipers and washers are working properly, and the washer fluid has additives to prevent freezing and is fully topped up.
- Lights are clean and working.
- Has a full tank of fuel.

Check the weather conditions:

- Check your local and national TV and Radio for travel and weather information.
- If possible, postpone your journey until conditions improve.
- Ensure all windows and mirrors are clear from mist, frost and snow at the start of, and throughout, your journey.

If you are out on the roads in poor conditions:

- Let someone know your destination and your expected time of arrival.



- Use the main roads, which have been treated, as much as possible, but do not assume that they will be free of ice and snow.
- Allow extra time for your journey and avoid the rush hour wherever possible, to help reduce congestion.
- Ensure your mobile phone is charged and take warm practical clothing, hot drinks, food, a torch and shovel as well, in case you break down or become stranded.

Generally 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, manoeuvre gently and avoid any harsh braking, acceleration or steering.
- Increase your following distances. On wet roads you need to be at least four seconds behind the vehicle in front and in icy conditions stopping can take 10 times longer so allow much greater following distances.
- Use dipped headlights in poor visibility and snow, so others can see you.
- Watch out for and allow extra space for unexpected obstacles and other road users, including motorbikes, cyclists, abandoned cars, pedestrians and children who may also be having difficulties in the conditions.
- Be aware that cold weather can adversely effect the batteries of electric vehicles so charging may take longer and the range could be reduced.

If you do break down:

- If you get into trouble stay with your vehicle, if possible, until help arrives.
- On motorways it is safest to leave the vehicle by the nearside doors and wait well away from the vehicle. If you need to return to the vehicle for warmth, ensure that all occupants are wearing their seatbelts in case of a collision.
- If you do have to leave your vehicle, make yourself visible to others. Ensure that you carry high visibility jackets, and put these on before leaving your vehicle, and never obscure any of your vehicle's lights as this will make it more difficult for on-coming traffic to see it.
- If you have to abandon your vehicle, give local police the details and park safely to avoid obstructing emergency services and maintenance vehicles, such as snow ploughs.



Fog:

- Slow down, keep your distance, and turn on your lights.
- Use fog lights if visibility is less than 100 metres but remember to switch them off when visibility improves.
- Don't speed up suddenly, even if it seems to be clearing, you can suddenly find yourself back in thick fog.
- Open your windows as listening to traffic can help determine the road conditions ahead.
- Avoid following the tail lights of the car in front.

Ice, snow and slush:

- Drive slowly allowing extra space to stop safely.
- Get into a low gear earlier than normal when braking, allow your speed to fall gradually and use the brake pedal gently.
- If you start skidding, steer more gently and/or ease off the accelerator but do not brake suddenly.
- Dazzle from the low winter sun can be dangerous, so carry a pair of sunglasses in the car.

Floods:

- Avoid entering floodwater if you can take an alternative route. If you do have to enter floodwater:
- Drive slowly in first gear but keep your revs high to prevent stalling.
- Go through the water one vehicle at a time and avoid waves formed by other vehicles.
- 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 floodwater before you drive at normal speed.

For more information:

- Call 0121 697 9131
- Email risksupport@uk.zurich.com
- Visit www.zurich.co.uk/business/our-expertise/risk-engineering

