

Safety Advice

for driving in bad weather

“While driving on icy roads, use the highest gear possible at the slowest speed. Avoid skidding by gentle acceleration, very gentle progressive braking and slow, steady movements of the steering wheel”



Dark nights, slippery roads and extreme weather can greatly increase the risk of having an accident or damaging your car while driving at this time of year. Here are some tips from Aviva when driving in adverse weather conditions.

Before you begin your journey

- Check local weather and traffic reports.
- Plan your route using major roads where possible as these are more likely to have been gritted.
- Avoid secondary roads or high ground where possible.
- Always inform someone of your journey and estimated arrival time.
- Bring a charged mobile phone and keep some food and drink in the vehicle with you.

Vehicle checks you should carry-out

1. **Tyres;** It is important that your tyre pressure is correct as tyre pressure decreases in colder weather and this affects traction. Check your tyre pressure when tyres are cold so that they correspond to your manufacturer's specifications (found in manual or door pillar). Ideally tread depth should be in the region of 3mm as deeper tread depth is more effective in clearing water on the roads.
2. **Windows;** Clear your windows and mirrors before you set out, carry a screen scraper and de-icer. Avoid use of hot water on the windscreen as it can crack the glass. Make sure wipers are in good condition and use screenwash with the proper additive, washing up liquid will foam up and can reduce visibility.
3. **Lights;** Check that all your lights are working and make sure your headlights are properly aimed. Clear any dirt or snow from headlights.
4. **Fuel;** Make sure you have plenty of fuel in case you need to reroute.
5. Identify how much ground clearance your vehicle has.
6. Is your car front or rear wheel drive?
Be aware of the fact that:
 - a) Front-wheel drive vehicles handle better in ice and snow
 - b) Rear-wheel drives can result in excessive sliding on corners
7. Has your car ABS or no ABS?

- ABS will automatically prevent wheels from locking.
- If you do not have ABS, gently but rapidly pump the brakes when the road is slippery.
- Do not 'jam' on your brakes if you begin to slide as it may cause your wheels to lock and your car to spin.

Driving safely on icy roads



1. Ensure your headlights are on.
2. To increase your traction pull off in second gear – the highest gear possible will avoid wheel spin.
3. Use the highest gear possible at the slowest speed. Avoid skidding by gentle acceleration, very gentle progressive braking and slow, steady movements of the steering wheel.
4. Maintain space away from other road users - stopping distances are 10 times longer in ice/snow. Leave at least the length of a car in front of you when stopped in traffic.
5. Avoid overtaking.
6. When driving on the flat, stay in the highest gear possible.
7. When driving downhill, choose 3rd or 4th gear (Select a low gear when travelling downhill especially if through bends).
8. If driving an automatic vehicle, familiarise yourself with the Manual Override function if available. This will allow you manually select an appropriate gear so as to avoid braking where that might lead to skidding.
9. Be particularly careful on tree-lined roads. Trees prevent the sun's rays from reaching the road, which could be still icy when everywhere else has thawed. Also, black ice is common in shaded areas.

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“If your car becomes flooded and water has entered the passenger compartment do not turn on the ignition as this can cause an electrical short circuit or airbags to be deployed”



...Michael Bannon, Motor Product Manager, Aviva

10. Control the space behind your vehicle by slowing early, the use of your brake lights will warn the following traffic and a slow approach before stopping will ensure the following traffic will do the same.
11. Reduce speed on turns to prevent skidding.
12. If you are skidding/spinning, gently turn the wheel in the same direction as the skid.

Driving in heavy rain or where floods have occurred



1. Reduce speed – It takes longer to stop a vehicle on wet roads so slow down and allow extra distance between you and the vehicle in front.
2. Most cars are quite low to the ground. To hit standing water at any speed will feel like hitting a static object. You can easily lose control of your vehicle.
3. Driving slowly will also avoid creating a bow wave which could cut the engine.
4. Aquaplaning occurs where the tyre thread fill with water and is unable to disperse it. This will increase the likelihood of losing control and when it occurs you feel the steering wheel going light. Keep the wheels straight, ease off the accelerator and don't brake. The vehicle will reduce speed through deceleration, the water will be dispersed and grip will return.

Driving in flood conditions

As a general rule of thumb do not drive through water that is deeper than the centre of your wheels and never drive through water where you are unsure of the depth. Remember a depth of only a few inches of water can cause damage to many vehicles. In particular engine damage can occur if water enters the air intake system and catalytic converters in the exhaust system may break if they are submerged in water.

1. Do not drive into standing water as there may be deeper potholes or open drains you cannot see. The water can hide any dip in the road.
2. Where a road is flooded consider driving in the middle of the road where the road surface is higher if it is safe to do so.
3. When entering water, go in slowly and keep a steady even throttle.
4. Do not change gear as this may cause water to be sucked into the engine.
5. Avoid any surface water where power lines have come down.
6. Allow any other cars including oncoming drivers to pass through before entering - never drive through a flooded area when another vehicle is travelling in the opposite direction.
7. If you drive in water to the level of your wheel rims, be sure to test your brakes after you are clear and it is safe to do so.

8. If your car becomes flooded and water has entered the passenger compartment do not turn on the ignition as this can cause an electrical short circuit or airbags to be deployed. If in doubt have the car checked by a professional.
9. If a vehicle has been standing in shallow water drive with extreme care and have it checked at the earliest opportunity.
10. If flooding occurs avoid unnecessary travel, but if you have to drive be prepared. Some of the essential items you should carry in the vehicle with you are list below under the Winter Car Survival Kit.
11. Avoid areas prone to flooding.
12. Listen to weather forecasts before setting off on a journey.
13. If you come across flooding try to find another route to your destination.
14. Avoid moving water - a car can begin to float in 12 inches or 30 centimetres. Your vehicle can be swept away in about two feet two feet (60cm) of flowing water
15. If you don't know how deep the water is don't enter it.
16. If the engine stalls in water use your hazard lights to warn other drivers.
17. Take special care when driving behind goods vehicles as they generate a considerable amount of spray which reduces your visibility, hold back to where you can see their mirrors.
18. If you are inside a vehicle and water is rising rapidly around you, abandon the vehicle immediately and move to higher ground to stay safe. If you have to leave your vehicle, be wary of strong currents and debris.

Winter car survival kit



1. Hi-vis vest
2. Map/Sat Nav
3. Phone
4. Phone charger
5. Towrope
6. Warning triangle
7. Jump leads
8. Torch
9. Fuel/Petrol can
10. Ice scraper
11. De-icer
12. Warm clothes and a hat - you can lose up to 60% of your body heat through your head
13. Bag of salt to grit road if particularly bad
14. Spare dry clothing, waterproof footwear
15. Food and drink