



WINTER DRIVING TIPS

The dark, long, winter months can make road conditions challenging. Breakdowns and accidents are more common. Ice, snow, heavy rain and fog require additional consideration. Winter driving is very different to other times of the year. To help, here are our top tips to ensure you, your drivers and your vehicle(s) are prepared for the winter.

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ASSESS

If the weather is very bad, or it's forecast to get worse, you should avoid driving completely or consider alternatives such as public transport.

PREPARE

If you really have to make the journey then there are some key preparations and considerations:

Vehicle



- Keep your vehicle well-maintained, ensuring your vehicle is regularly serviced and has an up-to-date MOT.
- Check your tyres regularly, as a change in weather can affect your tyre pressure.
- Check your vehicle battery. In winter, your car battery has to put up with low temperatures and increased heating and lights use, so it's important that it's working well.
- Check your wiper blades and make sure you replace any that are worn or damaged.
- Ensure you have anti-freeze in your windscreen washer and radiator.
- Make sure you have both an ice scraper and de-icer in your vehicle.

Driver



- If you have a cold, question if you should travel. Especially if you are on medications that could make you drowsy as it could affect your reaction times.
- Check the weather forecast and your route before setting off, and allow plenty of time to get to your destination.
- Ensure all ice, snow and condensation has been completely removed from your vehicle before you start driving.
- Prepare a winter safety kit so if you run into trouble you have all the equipment you'll need – including a torch, a small shovel, blankets, first aid kit and food/water supplies.
- Carry a fully-charged mobile phone and power bank. That way you can let friends/relatives know if your journey's taking longer than usual or call for help in an emergency.

Most of us have little experience driving in extreme conditions, so it's important to consider how this can affect your driving and how you can adapt to the conditions.

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ON THE ROAD

The roads can be dangerous in winter when there's snow, ice or sleet – our top tip is to take it slow.

Stopping distances are longer in bad conditions and reduced visibility (snow/fog etc.) will affect how far you can see ahead. Braking conditions can be doubled in wet conditions and increased by at least 10 times on snow or ice! Gentle manoeuvres and slow speeds are the key to safe driving in ice and snow.

Tips for keeping you and your vehicles safe on the winter roads:



- Allow extra time for your journeys
- Try to get up at least 10 minutes earlier to give you time to de-ice your vehicle.
- Clear windows using a scraper and de-icer and wait until the windscreen is fully demisted. You can speed this up and reduce your condensation by using your air-con.
- Clean snow from the roof – it can fall on to the windscreen and block your view.
- Make sure all car lights are working and the lenses are clean.
- Use your headlights when visibility is reduced – if you use fog lights make sure you turn them back off when visibility improves so they don't dazzle other drivers or obscure your brake lights.
- Check fuel levels and always have at least a quarter of a tank in case of unexpected delays.
- Wear comfortable, dry shoes so your feet don't slip on the pedals.
- Think about getting winter tyres or all-season tyres – these are made from a special rubber that gives better grip in cold, wet conditions.
- On snowy/icy roads, pull away in second gear, easing your foot off the clutch gently to avoid wheel-spin.
- When using brakes, apply them gently and gradually.
- Leave plenty of room between other vehicles.
- Keep a constant, safe speed when driving uphill and try to avoid changing gear on the hill.
- Slow down before driving downhill, using a low gear and try to avoid braking, as this could make you skid.

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