

The British winter is unpredictable. Bad weather can strike suddenly and severely so it is best to stay off the road. If you must drive, make sure you are prepared for the conditions.

Plan your journey

Before setting out on your journey during wintry weather conditions you should:

- Ask yourself if your journey is absolutely essential
 - Check the local and national radio forecasts
 - Listen to local and national radio for travel information
 - Tell someone what time you expect to arrive
 - Take warm clothes, food, boots, a torch, and a spade in snowy conditions
- Clear your windows and mirrors before you set out and carry a screen scraper and de-icer.

If you get into trouble:

- Do not use your mobile phone while driving - stop somewhere safe or ask a passenger to make the call.
 - It is best to use a roadside emergency telephone on a motorway, as the breakdown/emergency services will be able to locate you easily. If you have to use your mobile phone, make sure you know your location from the numbers on the marker posts on the side of the hard shoulder before you make the call.
 - Abandoned vehicles can cause problems for rescue vehicles and snow ploughs, so stay with your vehicle until help arrives to ensure the road is cleared as quickly as possible.
- If you have to leave your vehicle to get help make sure other vehicles can see you.

Vehicle conditions:

- It is even more important to check your vehicle is well maintained and serviced in winter.
 - Keep your lights, windows and mirrors clean and free from ice and snow.
 - Keep your battery fully charged.
 - Add anti-freeze to the radiator and winter additive to the windscreen washer bottles.
 - Make sure wipers and lights are in good working order, and the water reservoir is topped up.
- Check tyres have plenty of tread depth and are maintained at the right pressure.

Adjust your driving conditions:

- Hail, heavy snow and rain reduce visibility.
- Use dipped headlights and reduce your speed.

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When roads are icy or slushy:

- It can take ten times longer to stop in icy conditions than it does on a dry road, so drive slowly and allow extra room to slow down and stop.
- Use the highest gear possible to avoid wheel spin.
- Manoeuvre gently, to avoid harsh braking and acceleration.
- To brake on ice and snow without locking your wheels, get into a low gear earlier than normal, allow your speed to fall, and use the brake pedal gently. Ease off the accelerator if you get into a skid, but do not brake suddenly.

Watch out for fog:

- Drive very slowly using dipped headlights.
- Use fog lights if visibility is seriously reduced, but remember to switch them off when conditions improve.
- Don't hang on to the taillights of the vehicles in front - this gives you a false sense of security and means you may be driving too close. Don't speed up suddenly, even if the fog seems to be clearing, as you can suddenly find yourself back in thick fog.

Winter sun:

Dazzle from winter sun can be dangerous, so take extra care when driving on bright days.

Flooded roads:

- Don't attempt to cross if the water seems too deep.
- Drive slowly in first gear, but keep the engine speed high by slipping the clutch - this will stop you from stalling.
- Avoid the deepest water, usually near the kerb.
- Remember to test your brakes when you're through the flood before you drive at normal speed.

