

Driving safely in winter conditions

Before you set out:

- ✓ Always check local weather and traffic reports;
- ✓ Check tyres for adequate tread. Poor tyres will not grip when driving on snow and ice. If you live in an area where snow is common it might be worth changing to winter tyres with deeper tread;
- ✓ Use a good quality screen wash that protects down to at least -35 to prevent the water from freezing. If you don't, your windscreen wipers could be rendered useless in extreme conditions;
- ✓ Allow more time in the morning to clear car windows and mirrors of snow before setting off;
- ✓ Use lukewarm water or de-icer to defrost the outside of your vehicle. You should never use hot or boiling water;
- ✓ Make sure any auto wiper control is switched off before turning the ignition on as this could blow the wiper control fuse if they are frozen to the screen;
- ✓ Be prepared for every eventuality by ensuring that your car is equipped with the following: demisting pad, torch (wind-up so you don't run out of battery), spare screen wash, de-icer, ice scraper, blanket, shovel, phone charger, map and a square of carpet that you can use to put under your drive wheels should you get stuck in the snow;
- ✓ Remove snow from the top of your car. Otherwise breaking sharply could cause snow to fall onto the windscreen and hamper your vision or another driver's.

The following tips should always be followed when driving in the snow:

- ✓ Wear comfortable, dry shoes for driving. Cumbersome, snow-covered boots will slip on the pedals;
- ✓ It's important to accelerate gently, use low revs and change up to a higher gear as quickly as possible. You may need to move off in second gear as this will help reduce wheel slip;
- ✓ You may need to leave as much as 10 times the normal recommended gap between you and the car in front;
- ✓ If you do encounter a skid, steer into it - for example, if the rear of the car is sliding to the right, steer to the right. Do not take your hands off the steering wheel or stamp your foot on the brakes;
- ✓ Uphill - avoid having to stop part way up by waiting until it is clear of other cars or by leaving plenty of room to the car in front. Keep a constant speed, choosing the most suitable gear well in advance to avoid having to change down on the hill;
- ✓ Downhill - reduce your speed before the hill, use a low gear and try to avoid using the brakes. Leave as much room as possible between you and the car in front.
- ✓ If the road has not been gritted, be wary of driving in the wheel tracks of other vehicles as compressed snow is likely to be more icy than fresh snow;
- ✓ Controls such as the brakes, as well as the steering, accelerator and even gear changing should be operated smoothly and slowly;





- ✓ Sunglasses can help to reduce the glare of low winter sun on the snow;
- ✓ Keep your speed down and allow more time to stop and steer;
- ✓ You must use headlights when visibility is seriously reduced. You may also use front or rear fog lights but these must be switched off when visibility improves as they can dazzle other road users and obscure your brake lights.

De-icing your vehicle:

- ✓ It is recommended to allow about 10 minutes to clear your windscreen thoroughly using a scraper and de-icer if necessary. Don't forget about the other windows and your mirrors as well ... they're just as vital for safe visibility and are often ignored, limiting your vision, especially at junctions;
- ✓ Don't drive off like a tank-commander, with only a tiny hole cleared in the windscreen – only pull away when the windscreen, back window and side windows are fully clear – it can be dangerous and the Highway Code states it is illegal to drive with poor visibility;
- ✓ Plan ahead to save time in the mornings, either by putting a windscreen cover on the night before or getting up a little earlier so you have plenty of time to de-ice your vehicle;
- ✓ Never pour hot or boiling water on your windscreen, otherwise you run the risk of cracking the glass and an expensive repair bill. If you don't have any de-icer, you could use lukewarm water;
- ✓ It's also a good idea to carry a lock de-icer with you to clear your lock. If your locks do get frozen, try warming the key or spraying de-icer or an oil-based lubricant into the lock;
- ✓ Finally, ensure all your vehicle lights, front and rear, are free from frost and/or snow – a thick film of frost on the lens can affect the intensity of the lights, making it difficult for other road users to see you or your signals;
- ✓ If you use the vehicle's heater /screen demister, don't leave your car unattended while you wait for it to defrost as you run the risk of having your vehicle stolen.

If you get stuck:

- ✓ Straighten the steering and clear the snow from the wheels. Put a sack or old rug in front of the driving wheels to give the tyres some grip. Once on the move again, try not to stop until you reach firmer ground

For further information, and up to date weather, visit the Met Office web site:

 HM Government



www.metoffice.gov.uk/getreadyforwinter

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