

Driving in Adverse Weather

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Introduction

This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with and complement your policy documentation. Use the information to evaluate your current work-related road risk policies and procedures, to highlight any potential deficiencies in them.

Journey Planning

As with all adverse weather conditions, journey planning is key and should be a joint responsibility of both the employer and the employee. Information and instruction should be provided within your driving at work policy, driver handbook and any employee induction, training and safety briefings/tool-box talks.

Employers are required to assess the ability for safe journeys to be undertaken as well as the need to travel, especially in adverse weather conditions. However, if your journey is unavoidable, then suitable preparation should be made to protect the driver and other road users.

Managers and employees should consider the following before commencing a journey:

- Is the journey necessary or can it wait until the weather improves?
- Take advice on the weather forecast from the [Met Office](#), [Highways England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Ireland](#). Monitor these sites for regular updates and respond accordingly

If the journey is necessary:

- Is the vehicle prepared for the journey? Ensure that all mechanical systems are working, and you have sufficient fuel to cover all eventualities and delays
- Should an alternative route be planned for the journey? Any alternative route should also take into consideration your vehicle's dimensions, in particular for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) to avoid bridge collisions ([how to prevent vehicles from hitting bridges – GOV.UK](#))
- Is the employee prepared for driving in adverse weather conditions?
- Adjust driving styles to suit the conditions
- Implement appropriate lone working procedures (employees should be informed of these), with managers being aware of the route taken, to ensure that drivers can be located in case of breakdowns or other emergencies which may delay the journey/deliveries
- Has appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) been provided? And in the vehicle?
- Advise employees to keep warm clothing, snacks and drinks in the vehicle, and ensure mobile phones are fully charged and recovery service helpline numbers are to hand

During the Journey

- Pay attention to the changing road, traffic and weather conditions. Contact Management if the weather deteriorates and agree the best course of action
- Look out for variable message signs (electronic overhead signs) warning of conditions ahead, radio announcements
- During breaks check with the office/depot for updates and check relevant websites for weather and road condition updates



LOSS PREVENTION STANDARDS

- Be ready to slow down and take more care if you need to, particularly when approaching a bend and on exposed stretches of road
- Extend braking distance to allow the vehicle to stop safely in an emergency braking situation

Driving in Rain and Floods

- Driving through flood water is the number one cause of deaths during flooding
- Avoid driving through flood water: just 30cm of fast flowing water is enough to move a car
- 3 out of 4 cars damaged by flood water are written-off
- Stopping distances are greatly extended in the wet. Slow down and maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front
- 'Aquaplaning' is the term used when your vehicle's tyres lose their direct contact with the road surface, riding upon the surface of the water, making the vehicle very difficult to control. When it occurs, this condition can be countered by the driver taking their foot off the accelerator and reducing speed. It is advisable not to brake or steer suddenly
- Gently test your brakes frequently after driving through water, as they may be ineffective or slow to operate
- Forethought when parking your vehicle near rivers, the sea or other potential flood or tidal risks should be a consideration, opting where possible to park on high, stable ground

Driving in Windy Conditions

All vehicles, large or small, are prone to the force of the wind, especially cross-winds. Consideration should be given to more vulnerable loads; i.e. weight and distribution of diminishing load, particularly for goods vehicles and vans. High-sided vehicles are particularly susceptible to windy conditions and can be blown off course or over on to their side. This may occur on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross-winds, or when passing bridges, other high-sided vehicles, gaps in trees or in buildings.

In some circumstances, industry best practice for drivers of unloaded curtain sided trailers and goods vehicles is to drive with curtains secured in the open position, if possible, to reduce the effects of cross-winds. This is subject to the driver's own decision and must not be carried out if the drawn curtains obstruct the rear-view mirrors or it is considered that damage may be caused to the trailer roof, rear doors or curtains.

Of course, if the wind speed is particularly severe, consideration should be given to removing vulnerable vehicles from the road until the adverse weather passes; employers are reminded that they are responsible towards the safety and wellbeing of their drivers and other road users in such circumstances. In addition, drivers of high-sided vehicles should be aware that they face prosecution if they ignore road closure warning signs.

Other considerations include:

- Allowing extra time to travel
- Reducing road speed to an acceptable level for the conditions
- Increasing distance between the vehicle in front, and giving more consideration to Vulnerable Road Users (VRUs) such as motor cycles, cyclists and pedestrians, who are more likely to be impacted by the weather conditions

Driving in Ice and Snow

When falling snow reduces visibility, use your dipped headlights as you would in heavy rain or fog. Falling or freshly fallen snow need not cause too much difficulty, providing you remember to:

- Increase the gap between you and the vehicle in front (the chances of skidding are greater and stopping distance increased), and remember to look in your mirror before slowing down
- Test your brakes, very gently from time to time, but be sure to look in your mirrors before braking. Snow can pack behind the front wheels or around brake linkages under the car and so affect steering and braking
- Avoid harsh braking and acceleration, or sharp steering
- Always reduce your speed smoothly and in plenty of time on slippery surfaces
- Slow down in plenty of time before bends and corners
- Braking on an icy or snow-covered bend is extremely dangerous. The centrifugal force will continue to pull your vehicle outwards and the wheels will not grip very well, which could cause your vehicle to spin
- Brake on ice and snow without locking your wheels, get into a low gear earlier than normal, allow your speed to fall and use your brakes gently
- Clear the windscreen by hand. Your wipers, even with the aid of the heater, may not be able to sweep the snow clear. Snow might collect and pack around your lights and indicators. Before driving, clear the whole vehicle of snow
- Drive with care, even if the roads have been treated. Conditions can change over very short distances
- Keep your vehicle well-ventilated. The car heater turned up full can quickly make you drowsy
- Establish the weather and traffic conditions before your travel by listening to travel bulletins on the radio, checking the internet, and during your journey, through radio travel bulletins and/or information on the variable message signs

Overnight freezing usually results in an icy surface, especially on less-used roads. Look for signs of frost on verges, etc. It's even more dangerous when the roads are just beginning to freeze or thaw. The combination of water and ice adds up to an extremely slippery surface. Rain freezing on roads as it falls (black ice) is an invisible danger.

When driving on ice:

- Keep your speed down
- Treat every control – brakes, accelerator, steering, clutch and gears – very delicately
- If it's very cold, treat all wet-looking surfaces as though they're frozen because they probably are. If the road looks wet but there's no sound from the tyres, expect ice

If you get stuck in snow:

- Revving your engine to try to power out of the rut will just make the rut worse. Instead, move your vehicle slowly backwards and forwards out of the rut using the highest gear you can
- If this doesn't work, you may have to ask a friendly passer-by for a push or get your shovel out

If you get caught in a snow drift:

- Don't leave your vehicle
- Call your breakdown service or the emergency services and let help come to you
- Don't run the engine to keep warm

Driving in Fog

- Use dipped headlights so that other drivers can see you
- If it is foggy (less than 100m visibility) switch on your fog lights. Do not forget to turn them off when conditions improve
- Fog is often patchy so try not to speed up as visibility improves. You could suddenly find yourself back in thick fog further up the road; increase your braking distance and avoid 'tailing' the rear lights of the vehicle in front

LOSS PREVENTION STANDARDS

Parking and Manoeuvring

- Ensure your vehicle is parked well away from other vehicles (they are usually near the building entrance)
- Wind down the driver's window (about an inch) so you will be better placed to hear the movement of other vehicles which are quieter when on snow
- Reverse-park to allow you to have the best view when departing
- Before you drive-off be aware that your vision may have to adjust from the high-level lighting of the building or activity you have just been undertaking
- Make the same vehicle checks before moving-off that you made when starting the journey
- Use 2nd gear if moving-off in snow as this will remove some of the tendency for the road wheels to slip

Personal Safety

- Inform someone of your expected arrival time at your destination and your contact number
- Do not leave your vehicle unlocked whilst you are not inside, such as refuelling or stopping for a break, even if you are just cleaning the lights
- When you stop do not choose remote areas, use service stations or similar facilities
- Do not unlock your vehicle until you are next to it and have had a look around

Getting Stranded

- If you become stranded, stay with the vehicle and use its lights, horn, etc. to attract attention
- Run the engine for about 10-minutes at a time to utilise the heater, but do not run it all the time
- Ensure that you can open and close at least one window to allow ventilation
- Put on all spare clothing whilst you are still warm
- If there are other motorists who are also trapped, consider all getting into one vehicle and take turns in sleeping
- Monitor traffic information (usually on the 15, 30, 45, 60-minute interval), but do not leave the radio on all the time

Additional Information

- [The Highway Code](#)

Further risk management information can be obtained from [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#)

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LOSS PREVENTION STANDARDS