



Winter Driving Safety Briefing 2023

For Managers

Introduction

As autumn approaches, it may be a good time to take a look at your winter vehicle checks and prepare your fleet for winter. Driving in the winter weather can be more challenging than driving in other times of the year. Adverse weather, dark evenings and busier roads, all contribute to increased road risk.

The issues

Extreme weather such as snow, ice, wind, rain and flooding create winter driving risk factors. Remember that a single journey may take you into very different weather, road and traffic conditions, so you need to be prepared for each one. It is important that drivers adapt their driving to the varying conditions.



Six years of Police data shows that in the two weeks after the Autumn clock change there were an average of 278 more personal injury collisions than in the two weeks before the clock change



Will the UK driver shortage have a negative impact on roads being gritted? Each year, Highways Agency's prepares, 290,000 tons of salt, 500 trucks, operating from 90 Depots across the UK



Analysis reveals that RTCs increase by 20% amongst drivers during the winter months



Highways England launched a safety campaign in 2016 after statistics showed that people are 30 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured on the roads in rain than they are in snow

Identification

We suggest that you conduct analysis on incidents and near miss incidents that have been reported during the winter months. Include both insurance claims and non-reported damage, so that you also understand the financial impact of this issue. Understanding the root causes of incidents is a crucial element of the analysis. Examining the time of day, location, driver age and experience can give you an opportunity to put control measures in place to manage the risks.

Next Steps

Consider developing a winter driving safety campaign to raise awareness of winter driving risks and to refresh the knowledge of your drivers. We have provided some additional safety tips within guidance.



Remind all drivers fully defrost their vehicles prior to driving. NEVER leave the keys in the ignition with the engine running whilst the vehicle is unattended. **Thieves actively target these vehicles**



All managers and drivers should be aware of this insurance exclusion

Loss of or damage to the insured vehicle caused by theft or attempted theft where the ignition key or other removable ignition device has been left in or on the insured vehicle whilst such vehicle is unattended; or the vehicle has been left with the windows or roof panel open; or reasonable precautions have not been taken to protect the vehicle.

Tips for Drivers

Prepare yourself

- Refresh your knowledge of winter driving by reading the highway code
- If you need glasses (or contact lenses) to meet the highway code's minimum vision standards, you must wear them at all times while driving
- Make sure that you are well rested and fit to drive

Plan your journey

- Try to avoid driving if you can, if you have to drive, try to travel at a less busy times
- Plan your route and allow extra time for possible delays
- Plan to use main roads and bus routes as they are usually well gritted

Be extra vigilant for vulnerable road users

- Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged and you pack extra clothes, drinks, food and a spade (in case of emergency)
- Make sure someone knows you will be travelling and you have a contact number

Check your vehicle

- Thoroughly defrost your vehicle and complete a daily walk-round check to ensure that,
- Mirrors are clean, correctly adjusted and set to minimise blind spots
- Windows are clean and clear
- Windscreen wipers are working properly, screen wash is topped up and the system is fully operational
- Lights & indicators are working, clean, and can be seen
- Tyres are correctly inflated, in good condition with adequate tread depth
- Once inside your vehicle,
- Check you have enough fuel for your journey
- Ensure your seating position is comfortable and that you can reach all of the controls
- Keep your vehicle well ventilated to clear any condensation builds up on the windows

While driving

In Fallen Leaves

- Slow down if you are driving on a road covered with leaves, especially when driving around bends – they will be slippery if wet
- Be aware that leaves make it difficult to see potholes and other surface irregularities
- Be cautious where leaves are piled – there may be children playing in or around them
- Keep your windscreen leaf free to avoid wet leaves getting stuck under the wiper blades
- To avoid the possibility of a fire hazard from the exhaust system or catalytic converter, avoid parking your vehicle over leaf piles.



In Low Sun

- The risk of becoming dazzled is greater from the sun rising and setting in autumn – be prepared for it!
- Slow down immediately if dazzled
- Engage your windscreen sun visor a.s.a.p.
- Wear sunglasses that should be kept within easy reach in your car
- **Remember:**
 - If the sun is behind you, it's in the eyes of those approaching you
 - If the sun is in your eyes, it's probably affecting those following you

In Frost, Ice and Snow

- Be prepared and look at weather forecasts well in advance – you will need extra time to prepare your vehicle prior to driving off
- If conditions are severe enough consider waiting until they have improved or not driving at all
- Fully remove all ice and snow from windows, mirrors and light casings and remove snow build up from roof before attempting to drive off
- Use dipped headlights to keep visible to other road users
- Keep heater and window de-misters active to maintain good visibility
- Maintaining low revs will avoid wheels spinning as you pull away and try to maintain a smooth and gentle driving style
- Test road conditions early in your journey but only when and where it is safe to do so
- If you do find yourself in a skid just release the accelerator to slow the speed of the skid until you regain control – the use of brakes should be avoided as this will prolong the skid
- If you start to spin you should steer the vehicle in the direction of the spin until the vehicle straightens up



In Wet Weather

- Slow down
- Use dipped headlights
- Avoid standing water on roadways
- Increase your following distance and safety margins
- Ensure that your windscreen wiper blades are in good condition

Remember that rain reduces your ability to see and greatly increases the distance required to slow down and stop. Remember that you will need about TWICE your normal braking distance. Use windscreen wipers, washers and dipped headlights; drive smoothly and plan your manoeuvres in plenty of time.

Flooded Roads

- Avoid the deepest water – which is usually near the kerb
- Don't attempt to cross if the water seems too deep
- If you are not sure of the water's depth, look for an alternative route
- If you decide to risk it, drive slowly in first gear but keep the engine speed high by slipping the clutch – this will stop you from stalling
- Be aware of the bow wave from approaching vehicles – operate an informal 'give way' with approaching vehicles
- Test your brakes once clear of the water

If driving in fog or mists

Avoid driving in fog unless your journey is absolutely necessary. Fog is one of the most dangerous weather conditions. An accident involving one vehicle can quickly involve many others, especially if they are driving too close to one another.



If you must drive

- Follow weather forecasts and general advice to drivers in the local and national media
- Allow plenty of extra time for your journey
- Check your car before you set off

- Make sure everything is in good working order, especially the lights
- Switch on headlights and fog lamps if visibility is reduced
- If you can see the vehicles to your rear, the drivers behind can see you – switch off your rear fog lamps to avoid dazzling them
- Use the demister and windscreen wipers
- Do not ‘hang on’ to the rear lights of the car in front as you will be too close to be able to brake safely
- Switch off distracting noises and open the window slightly so that you can listen for other traffic, especially at crossroads and junctions
- Beware of speeding up immediately when visibility improves slightly, in patchy fog you could find yourself ‘driving blind’ again only moments later
- If you break down, inform the police and get the vehicle off the road as soon as possible

If driving in strong winds

Gusts are more likely on open stretches of road, when passing bridges or gaps in hedges, or when overtaking high-sided vehicles. Wind can bring down tree branches, blow you off course or blow other vehicles into your path.



- Keep both hands on the wheel
- Be ready for stronger winds and gusts on exposed stretches of road or when passing high-sided vehicles
- Be ready for sudden gusts when passing tall buildings in urban areas
- Keep your speed down – strong gusts won’t blow you as far off course

- Take care and leave extra room around cyclists and motorcyclists. They're particularly vulnerable to sudden gusts and may veer across the road
- Keep your distance from other vehicles, especially high-sided vehicles and caravans
- Avoid towing high-sided trailers like caravans or horseboxes if very windy conditions are forecast
- Twigs or small branches in the road could mean there's a tree or large branch in the way around the next bend
- Partially fallen trees can hang above the sweep of your headlights, making them hard to spot
- Plan your journey carefully, checking weather and traffic bulletins regularly

For clarification or further information please contact –

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