



During the winter months road surfaces are covered by frost, ice and sometimes even snow. Your driving visibility is reduced. All of these factors can make winter driving particularly hazardous.

When venturing out in the snow and ice make sure you only make journeys that are essential. If you must venture out on the roads ensure that you and your car are equipped to deal with the cold snap.

Prepare your vehicle for winter

- check your tyres, the minimum depth is 1.6mm - in rain, ice and heavy snow the more grip you have the better
- make sure your lights are clean and working
- check that your battery is fully charged
- check the condition of your front and rear windscreen wipers
- make sure your washer bottle is full with water and screen wash and keep it topped up through the winter
- keep the following items in your vehicle
 - ice scraper
 - de-icer
 - blanket
 - jump leads
 - shovel
 - decent footwear
 - first aid kit
 - hazard warning triangle
 - torch
 - high visibility jacket

Before setting off

- plan your journey
- make sure all your windows and mirrors are completely clear of ice or snow before you set off
- never use boiled water from a kettle as this can cause damage
- make sure all of your windows are demisted and not just a small area
- take a mobile phone with you for contact. Remember to pull over and park safely before using it
- if the weather is particularly bad tell others your departure and expected arrival time and route

Adjust to the driving conditions

- heavy rain, snow or hail reduce visibility. Use dipped headlights and reduce your speed
- make sure you leave plenty of space between you and the car in front - in wet weather stopping distances will be at least double those required for stopping on dry roads as your tyres have less grip on the road
- if you find the steering is unresponsive, ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually as the water is probably preventing the tyres from gripping the road

Driving in fog

- watch out for fog it can be patchy and often drifts
- allow extra time for your journey
- check your car before setting off, especially your lights
- switch on dipped headlights
- use fog lamps if visibility is reduced to 100 metres or less. Remember to switch them off when visibility improves as they can dazzle other road users
- remember that fog also makes the road wet and slippery
- do not hang on to the rear lights of the car in front as you will be too close to brake safely
- beware of speeding up immediately visibility improves slightly. In patchy fog you could find yourself driving blind again only moments later

Winter and spring sun

- winter and spring sunlight can present drivers with an unexpected hazard. If you are blinded by glare, reduce your speed
- keep a pair of sunglasses handy

When roads are icy or slushy

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

Driving in snow

- if you must venture out on the roads ensure that you and your car are equipped to deal with the cold snap
 - make sure you are equipped with warm clothes, food and boots, torch and a shovel
 - clear your windows and mirrors before you set out and carry a screen scraper and de-icer
 - clear the roof of your car of large amounts of snow
- plan your journey
 - check the local and national weather forecasts
 - listen to local and national radio for travel information
 - tell someone at your destination what time you expect to arrive

If you get into trouble

- Do not use a mobile phone while driving. Stop somewhere safe or ask a passenger to make the call
- On a motorway, it is best to use a roadside emergency telephone, because the breakdown/emergency services will be able to locate you easily. If you have a mobile phone, make sure you give them the number of the closest marker post to you on the hard shoulder.
- Abandoned vehicles can hold up rescue vehicles and snow ploughs. To ensure that the road is cleared as quickly as possible, stay with your vehicle until help arrives.
- If you have to leave your vehicle to get help, make sure other drivers can see you.