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Adverse Weather

Believing that an investment in Safety is an investment in Your Future.

Heavy rain, snow, ice, fog, smoke, and wind create concern for all motorists. For the professional driver, though, adverse weather can take on even greater significance. Driving during adverse weather is often a necessity for professional drivers, and as paid professionals they are held to a higher standard of performance and safety. No one is surprised when private passenger vehicle drivers make mistakes, especially during adverse weather. For the professional driver, however, driving safely during all kinds of weather, traffic, and road conditions is expected.

There are several strategies safety professionals recommend to help reduce the risk of weather-related accidents.

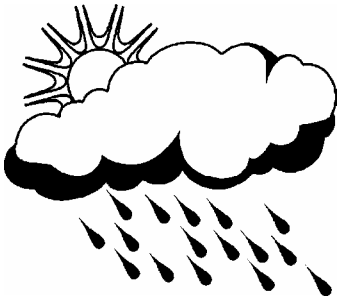
- **Reduce speed.**
- **Increase following distance.**
- **Turn and brake carefully on slippery roads.**
- **Turn on your lights.**
- **Under severe adverse conditions, consider parking in a safe place and waiting until conditions improve.**

Driving during adverse weather can be demanding for both the driver and the vehicle. It is important to know your vehicle is ready for all types of weather. The following list includes some of the essential vehicle components and supplies that should be inspected before and during your trip, keeping in mind the role they will play in helping you deal with adverse weather conditions.

- Tires
- Lights & reflectors
- Brakes
- Fuel tank
- Mirrors
- Windshield wipers & washer fluid
- Exhaust system
- Antifreeze
- Fifth wheel
- Tire chains
- Personal gear & supplies
- Heating & defrosting system

Make sure you know what to expect during your trip. Listen to the latest weather reports to learn about adverse weather conditions. Plan your trip to allow for unexpected delays. In the case of severe adverse weather, consider altering your route to avoid the worst weather or postponing your trip until conditions improve.

Each type of adverse weather condition is associated with unique hazards. Listed below are several common adverse weather conditions, the associated hazards, and tips safety professionals recommend.



Rain

Rain is the most common adverse-weather condition. Despite this, drivers often overlook the dangers of driving in rain. The hazards associated with rain include: slippery road surfaces, wet brakes, reduced visibility, and traffic congestion. Compensating for these hazards by reducing your speed and increasing your following distance is essential.

Remember:

Under ***ideal*** road and weather conditions the recommended following distance for large commercial vehicles is approximately six to eight seconds. To determine the recommended following distance for your vehicle, multiply one second times each ten feet of vehicle length. Add one additional second if traveling over 40 mph.

Example: A 60-foot tractor-trail is traveling 60 mph. The recommended following distance is:

6 seconds + 1 second (over 40 mph) = **7 seconds**

* Information provided by the National Safety Council

(over please)

Watch for pools of water on the road. Hydroplaning occurs when tires ride above the road surface on a thin layer of water or oil. Speed, water, tire-tread depth, tire air pressure, and road surface characteristics are factors that influence whether a vehicle is at risk of hydroplaning. It is possible for vehicles to hydroplane at speeds as low as 30 miles per hour or lower depending on various factors. Watch for other motorists who are driving smaller, lighter vehicles, and who may be more likely to lose control of their vehicles. Turn on your lights to help ensure other motorists can see your vehicle.

Snow

Snow is a common weather condition in many areas of the country. When freezing temperatures are expected along your route, be prepared for snow. The hazards of snow include: slippery roads, reduced visibility, and increased traffic congestion. Road conditions can vary considerably depending on the quantity of snow and other characteristics. When driving in snow, consider carefully what speed is appropriate for the prevailing conditions. Reducing your speed and increasing your following distance is important to compensate for increased stopping distance and to ensure you are able to maintain control of your vehicle. Accelerate slowly and look far ahead for potential hazards. In some areas snow chains may be required. Before traveling into these areas, make sure you have the required chains and that they are in proper working condition. In areas of the country where snow is uncommon, be especially cautious of motorists who may not have experience driving in snow. In these areas, states may not have the equipment needed to keep roads clear of snow and ice.

Ice

Ice and freezing rain present the most hazardous conditions. The potential hazards of ice and freezing rain include very slippery roads, reduced visibility, and increased traffic congestion. Stopping distance can increase dramatically on ice and the potential for losing control of your vehicle is high. The risk of being involved in an accident as a result of other motorists losing control of their vehicles is also high. Under these conditions it is essential to reduce your speed, increase your following distance, and proceed very carefully. Look far ahead for potential hazards. Under severe conditions, it may be best to find a safe place to park and wait until conditions improve.

Ice can form on roadways for a number of reasons. Wet roads can become icy whenever temperatures fall below freezing. Melting snow and ice can refreeze at night when temperatures drop below freezing. Ice can form in shaded areas under bridges and overpasses at times when roads are otherwise free of ice. Expect ice to form more quickly on bridges and overpasses.

Glare ice is perhaps the most dangerous condition. Freezing rain can quickly turn to ice on the roadway, especially when the road surface temperature is below freezing. Accumulating ice on mirrors, antennas, and road signs are indications that ice is also forming on the roadway. A lack of water spray from other vehicles is also an indication that ice is forming.

Fog and Smoke

Fog and smoke can present a serious and unexpected hazard, sometimes greatly reducing visibility in just seconds. Many serious car and truck pile-ups have occurred as a result of thick fog or smoke. Watch for fog to accumulate in low-lying areas. The potential hazards of fog and smoke include reduced visibility, headlight glare, sudden traffic congestion, and vehicles stopped on the roadway. When approaching fog or smoke, slow down to ensure there is enough space to stop safely if you encounter slowed or stopped traffic. Use your low-beam headlights. When visibility is severely reduced, consider parking in a safe place and waiting for conditions to improve.

Wind

Strong winds can create an extreme hazard for high-profile vehicles, such as tractor-trailers and recreational vehicles. High winds are often associated with severe storms that can create additional hazards as well. The weight and configuration of your vehicle will determine how it will be affected by wind. Light, high profile vehicles are likely to be affected more readily than heavier, low profile vehicles. When

traveling during strong wind conditions, reduce your speed, increase your following distance, and look as far ahead as possible for potential hazards. Watch for other motorists who may be having difficulties staying in their lane. Dust and dirt can reduce visibility. Blowing debris can cause other motorists to drive erratically. If the wind is strong enough to threaten the stability of your vehicle, find a safe place to park and wait until conditions improve.

Driving defensively is always important, but during adverse weather conditions, it is critical. Plan ahead and be prepared. Remember to adjust your speed and following distance in all adverse weather conditions. Do not take chances when weather and road conditions deteriorate. Drive with caution and watch for other motorists who lack the skill or experience to drive safely. Most importantly, under severe conditions, finding a safe place to park and waiting for conditions to improve may be your safest option.