

Driving Considerations in Adverse Weather Conditions

Winter driving poses unique challenges that demand extra caution and preparation. Whether you're a sole trader or managing a small business fleet, ensuring safety on the roads is critical. Here are key considerations to keep in mind for navigating adverse weather conditions safely:

1. Adjust Your Speed

In poor weather conditions, speed is a significant factor in accidents. Reducing your speed gives you more time to react to unexpected hazards, such as ice, snow, or reduced visibility. Always drive slower than usual and adjust further for particularly severe conditions.

2. Gentle Steering and Braking

Sudden movements can cause skidding on slippery surfaces. When steering, accelerate or decelerate gently to maintain control. If your vehicle begins to skid, steer into the skid and avoid harsh braking to regain stability.

3. Extend Stopping Distances

Stopping distances can increase significantly on wet or icy roads—up to ten times longer in snowy or icy conditions. Keep a safe distance from the vehicle ahead, ensuring you have enough time to stop gradually if needed.

4. Use Headlights and Fog Lights Appropriately

Low visibility is common in winter, especially during heavy rain, fog, or snow. Use dipped headlights during the day and fog lights when visibility is below 100 metres. Don't forget to switch off fog lights when conditions improve to avoid dazzling other drivers.

5. Prepare for Black Ice

Black ice is almost invisible and highly dangerous. Be extra cautious on shaded parts of the road, bridges, and overpasses, as these areas freeze first. If you suspect black ice, reduce your speed further and avoid sudden movements.

6. Stay in Lower Gears on Hills

When driving on icy or snow-covered slopes, use a lower gear to maintain better control. Avoid using cruise control, as it can cause wheels to spin in slippery conditions.

7. Plan Your Journey Around Weather Warnings

Always check the weather forecast before setting out. Avoid travelling during amber or red warnings unless absolutely necessary. For businesses, consider postponing meetings or deliveries if the forecast predicts dangerous conditions.

8. Emergency Kit Essentials

Ensure your vehicle is stocked with a winter emergency kit, including:

- Ice scraper and de-icer
- Torch with spare batteries
- Warm clothes and blankets
- High-visibility jacket
- Jump leads
- Mobile phone charger

9. Keep Tyres in Top Condition

Ensure your tyres have sufficient tread (a legal minimum of 1.6mm, but 3mm is safer in winter). If possible, consider winter tyres for enhanced grip in snow and ice.

By adopting these driving practices and planning ahead, you'll significantly reduce the risks posed by winter weather. Remember, no journey is worth risking your safety or that of others on the road.

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