



FORS Winter Driving Guide

How to keep safe during the winter period



Know your responsibilities, be informed and be prepared:

As a professional driver, it is your responsibility to make allowance for severe weather. This guide will help you get through the winter. Following the simple steps set out in this guide can help ensure your own safety and that of other road users.

There are three key points you need to consider for keeping yourself safe in winter weather:

- Check the forecast
- Check your vehicle
- Plan for hazardous conditions

Check the weather forecasts for warnings that may affect you

This information will allow you and your operation to plan around the severe weather and pre-warn customers of delays.

The Met Office (www.metoffice.gov.uk) produces alerts for high-sided and vulnerable vehicles.

You can help by informing your manager and customers in advance that your journey may be affected by bad weather.

Planning ahead and knowing your approximate journey time is essential during winter. You should plan your route in detail, identify any potential hazards and determine where you will stop for rest breaks.



Thorough vehicle checks are essential throughout the year but pay particular attention to the following checks during bad weather:

Tyre tread

Worn tyres reduce starting traction by 30 - 50 per cent. It is good practice not to allow your tyre treads depth to get below 3mm. The legal limit for HGV/PSV (vehicles over 3.5 tonne maximum authorised mass) is 1mm and is 1.6mm for vans/cars/minibuses (vehicles under 3.5 tonne maximum authorised mass).

Frozen brakes

Check that the brake lines are not frozen and if defrosted have not split.

Windows, windscreen wipers and mirrors

These should be cleared of snow and cleaned to ensure good visibility. Check your windscreen wipers are working correctly to maximise your visibility in poor weather conditions.

Fluid levels

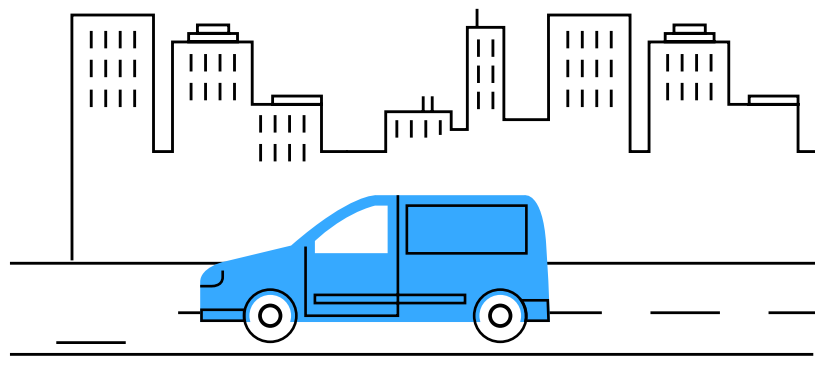
Ensure that the vehicle's fluids (water, oil, power steering fluid, brake fluid, anti-freeze fluid, windscreen wiper fluid and AdBlue) are topped up.

Exhaust

Check your exhaust system to make sure it is clear of snow.

Vehicle and trailer body

Remove as much snow as possible from the vehicle's windows, lights, registration plates and doors using a long, clean, non-abrasive snow broom.



Check you have the correct equipment; be prepared for every situation

Here is a list of equipment must-haves:

De-icer and an ice scraper

It is a legal requirement to ensure your front and rear windscreens are clear of snow and ice before driving.

Warm clothing

Carry warm clothing including boots, hat and gloves and consider packing a blanket too.

Torch

Don't rely on the torch in your mobile phone – carry a spare torch.

A shovel and a bag of sand or salt

Some minor roads are not treated during severe weather conditions therefore it's easy for your vehicle to get stuck.

Road atlas

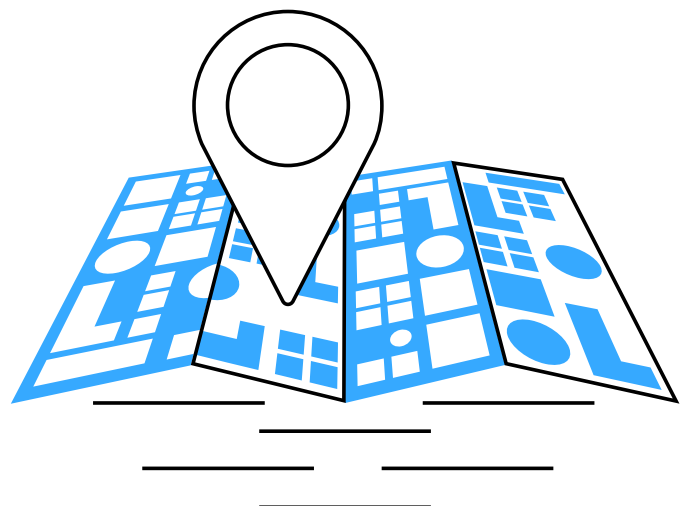
In case your sat-nav doesn't work.

Extra food and drink

Essential in case you end up being stranded for a long period of time.

Mobile phone charger

Carry an "in vehicle charger" - in the event your mobile phone runs out of battery. Consider carrying a portable battery/charging bank.



Driving in hazardous conditions – hints and tips

Snow and ice

Making stops in snow and ice

When making deliveries or planned stops and stepping out of your vehicle be aware that you may be stepping out onto a slippery surface, take that extra few seconds to familiarise yourself with your surroundings.

If you have passengers ensure they disembark from the vehicle in a safe area where possible and make them aware of the conditions around them.

Slow down

One of the most important actions to take when driving in snow or icy conditions is to reduce speed.

Drive smoothly

Braking, accelerating or turning harshly can unsettle the vehicle leading to loss of control.

Bigger braking area

In snow and ice, stopping distances can increase by as much as 10 times compared to good conditions.

Plan alternative routes

Have a back-up route planned to your destination.

Black ice

Is invisible to the eye. In freezing conditions it can form without warning.

Heavy rain

Visibility

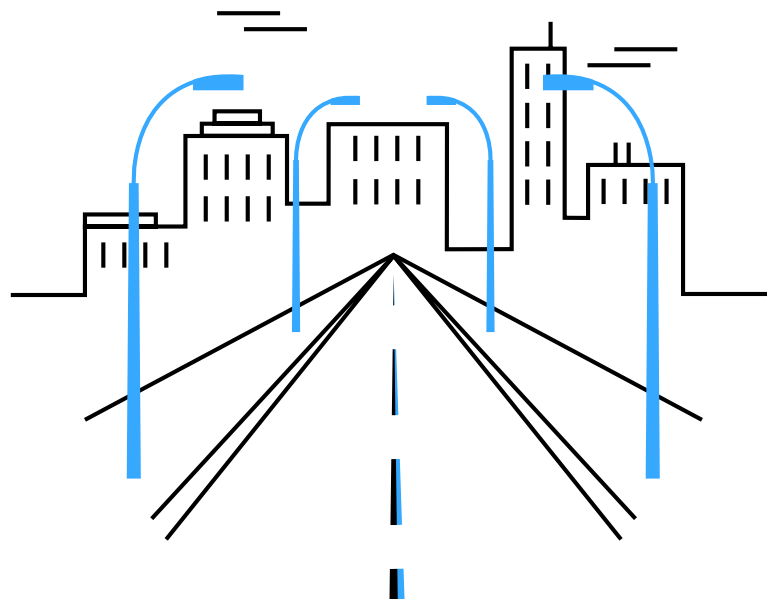
Heavy rain will limit your visibility and double your stopping distance. Keep well back from the vehicle in front

Aquaplaning

If the steering becomes unresponsive, it probably means that water is preventing the tyres from gripping the road. Ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually

Use defensive driving techniques

Be prepared for the unexpected. Anticipate what other drivers might do



Fog

You **MUST** use headlights when visibility is seriously reduced. This is generally when you cannot see for more than 100 metres ahead (328 feet).

Using your front and rear fog lights can help you keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front and make vehicles aware of your presence. But remember to switch them off when visibility improves.

When driving in fog you should:

- Use your lights.
- Be able to pull up well within the distance you can see clearly. This is particularly important on motorways and dual carriageways as vehicles are travelling faster.
- Use your windscreen wipers and demisters.
- Beware of other drivers not using headlights.
- Not accelerate to get away from a vehicle which is following too closely.
- Check your mirrors before you slow down or apply your brakes.
- Stop in the correct position at a junction with limited visibility and listen for traffic. When you are sure it is safe to emerge, do so confidently and do not hesitate in a position that puts you directly in the path of approaching vehicles.

Windy conditions

High-sided vehicles are vulnerable to strong gusts of wind, which can even overturn them

Be aware that when driving on bridges or viaducts, the effect of the wind can be even greater.

If you are driving a vehicle that is high sided be cautious when you are unladen as the wind will affect you more.

If you have a curtain sided trailer that is empty you should tie your curtains securely to lessen the affect as the wind will pass through the empty trailer.

Plan you journey and look out for road and bridge closures that affect high sided vehicles such as large HGVs, large coaches and double decker buses.

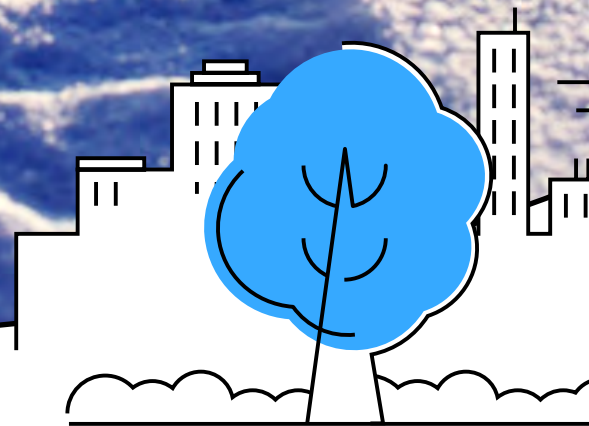
Driving through flooded areas; avoid it if you can

Assess the depth of the water before attempting to drive through any standing water. Avoid driving through water more than four inches deep. If you come across an area of the road that is flooded and the water seems to be moving, do not drive through it.

If safe to do so, approach the flooded area at 1-2 mile per hour and then build up to 3-6 mile per hour in order to create a ripple effect displacing some of the water.

If it is safe, drive through the centre part of the road as this will be slightly higher than the edges.

Dry your brakes – once through the flooded area you will need to dry your brakes. This can be done by gently applying them at low speed. The friction will create heat and dry them out.



Stay safe in bad weather

Following the hints and tips in this guide will help keep you safe during bad weather.

Remember to do the following to ensure you are prepared for your journey:

- Check the weather forecast before setting off on any journey, using the Met office website
- Check your vehicle thoroughly and clear it of snow
- Ensure you have all the equipment you need including suitable clothing and footwear

ALWAYS MAKE SAFETY YOUR PRIORITY

If you do not feel comfortable driving in the weather conditions presented to you, pull over where safe and inform your manager.



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08448 09 09 44

enquiries@fors-online.org.uk

www.fors-online.org.uk



@FORS_online

