



DRIVE SAFELY THIS WINTER

Gearing up for the worst Scotland's weather might throw at you in the months ahead starts here!

HOW TO DRIVE SAFELY THIS WINTER

Brrrrrilliant advice and timely tips on safe and sensible seasonal driving

The coming of winter always brings bad news for Scottish motorists with traditionally some of the worst driving conditions experienced anywhere in the UK. It can hit us first and leave us last, meaning month after month of mounting misery on the roads with unpredictable traffic delays and unforeseen dangers lurking around every corner.

It's no surprise that road casualty statistics soar during the winter months – so read on and make sure that, this year, you're not one of them!

Look after your car and it will look after you

Before winter bites, have your car professionally serviced so it can be checked for such things as anti-freeze, tyre pressures and tread depth which should be at least 3mm for winter driving compared to the minimum legal limit of 1.6mm.

Have your battery tested to make sure it won't let you down with all the extra hard work it has to do during the winter months.

Keep checking that your wipers and lights are in perfect working order, and that your washer reservoir is fully topped up with the right concentration of screenwash additive. Squirt WD40 into your door locks to prevent them from freezing.



Never use water to defrost your windscreen. Warm water can crack the glass and damage the rubber wipers, whereas cold water will quickly freeze over again.



Before you take to the road

The first thing to do is ask yourself ... is this journey really necessary?

Make sure you fully understand the hazards and risks of possible weather conditions you might meet along the way – especially ice, snow and fog – before you venture out. The **Highway Code** is a great source for valuable information on this and other key winter driving issues. To view online, go to **www.direct.gov.uk** then type 'winter driving' in the search box provided.

Check the weather forecast for your intended route online (e.g. **www.trafficscotland.org**) together with broadcast weather updates and travel information on local and national radio.

Plan your journey so you can stick to major roads as these routes are more likely to have been treated for snow and ice. Allow extra time for your journey, and tell someone about your route and estimated time of arrival.

Give your car time to fully defrost before your set off, and make sure the heater is blowing hot air to help keep the windscreen clear.

Take warm clothing, boots, a high visibility jacket, a torch and a map to help identify your location if you get into trouble unless, of course, you have a satellite navigation system in your car or a GPS facility on your mobile.

Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged in case you have to call for help. Always carry a scraper and a plentiful supply of de-icer. In snowy conditions, stash a shovel and a tow-rope in the boot. You should also consider taking a thermos flask with a hot drink or soup to warm you up if you find yourself stranded.



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Drive to the conditions

Snow and ice

- It takes 10 TIMES longer to stop in these conditions, so cut your speed and keep a good distance between you and the vehicle in front.
- Hail, rain and snow all reduce visibility – so use dipped headlights.
- Make sure your lights, indicators and number plates are kept clear of snow and road salt.
- Manoeuvre gently, avoiding harsh steering, braking and acceleration.
- Drive in the highest gear possible to avoid wheel spin.
- To avoid locking up when braking, change down to a lower gear earlier than normal to slow the car down and then brake gently.
- Keep the car well ventilated as a heater going full blast all the time can make you drowsy.
- If your steering suddenly feels light, this could indicate black ice. Slow down using your gears, avoid sudden braking and drive on slowly until your steering control improves.

Fog

- Fog is the most dangerous of all winter weather conditions for motorists – especially freezing fog which can make the road surface wet and slippery.
- Drive very slowly with dipped headlights. Use front and rear fog lamps if visibility is seriously impaired – generally when you cannot see for more than 100 metres (328 feet) – remembering to turn them off if visibility improves.
- Don't rely on the rear lights of the vehicle in front to lead the way. This can cause you to travel too close and not be able to stop in time if the vehicle in front brakes.
- Fog can be patchy, so don't speed up if it appears to clear as you could suddenly find yourself back in the thick of it!

Rain and flooding

- Rain and spray from other vehicles can make it difficult to see and be seen so slow down and always drive with dipped headlights.
- If steering becomes unresponsive, this could be because water is preventing the tyres gripping the road. Ease off the accelerator and slow down gradually.
- Never attempt to drive through floodwater if you are unsure how deep it is, and don't drive through any kind of floodwater if a vehicle is coming the other way. Keep towards the middle of the road to avoid deeper water at the side of the road.
- Always test your brakes after driving through a flooded area as soon as you can be sure it is safe to do so by checking the traffic behind in your rear view mirrors.

Drive to the conditions continued...

Low winter sun

- The angle of the sun during winter is often too low for your visor to be of any help. If you are temporarily blinded by glare, it would be advisable to put on a pair of polarised sunglasses.
- Make sure you keep your windscreen clean both inside and out, to reduce the effects of glare.

High winds

- Take extra care when driving over bridges or open stretches of road exposed to strong winds.
- Keep your distance from motorcycles and make sure there is always sufficient space for you to pass high sided vehicles as they could suddenly swerve or even topple over - better to be late than never arrive at all!



Particularly on rural roads, watch out for areas that are shaded from the sun where poor road conditions such as black ice may linger after conditions have improved elsewhere.

What if you get into trouble?

If you find yourself in trouble on a motorway, it's always best to use an emergency roadside telephone as this will make it easier for rescue services to locate you. If you have to use a mobile phone, you can pinpoint your location using the numbers on the nearest marker post on the hard shoulder.

Never use a mobile while driving – either wait until you can stop somewhere safe or get a passenger to make the call.

If you have to leave the car to get help, wear a high visibility jacket or vest to make sure other vehicles can see you – whether on a country road or on a motorway hard shoulder.



If you get stuck in a snowdrift, try to manoeuvre yourself out by moving slowly backwards and forwards using the highest gear you can.

Watch out for gritters and snowploughs

Take extra care when travelling behind winter maintenance vehicles.

Salting vehicles can travel at speeds up to 40mph, spraying salt and grit across the road. This can be a hazardous operation and remember ... it takes time for the road salt to take effect!

Watch out for the hazard of irregular amounts of snow thrown up by snowploughs. Avoid the temptation to overtake snowploughs by squeezing past into partially cleared lanes.