

ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION OFFICE
**DRIVING IN
ADVERSE WEATHER
CONDITIONS**



DRIVING IN ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

The Weather

The weather is an important factor when you are driving. If it's really bad, it might be best to postpone your trip. Listen to the local weather forecast and follow the advice in this leaflet.

Visibility

You **MUST** use headlights when visibility is seriously reduced, generally when you cannot see for more than 100 metres (328 feet). You may also use front or rear fog lights in addition to headlights, but you **MUST** switch them off when visibility improves.

Wet Weather

In wet weather, stopping distances will be at least double those required for stopping on dry roads. This is because your tyres have less grip on the road.

In wet weather

- you should keep well back from the vehicle in front. This will increase your ability to see and plan ahead
- 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
- the rain and spray from vehicles may make it difficult to see and be seen.

Icy & Snowy Weather

In winter check the local weather forecast for warnings of icy or snowy weather. **DO NOT** drive in these conditions unless your journey is essential. If it is, take great care. Carry a spade, warm clothing, a warm drink and emergency food in case your vehicle breaks down or cannot proceed. Before you set off

- you **MUST** be able to see, so clear all snow and ice from all your windows
- you **MUST** ensure that lights and number plates are clean
- make sure the mirrors are clear and the windows are de-misted thoroughly.

When driving in icy or snowy weather

- drive with care, even if the roads have been gritted
- keep well back from the vehicle in front as stopping distances can be ten times greater than on dry roads
- take care when overtaking gritting vehicles, particularly if you are riding a motorcycle
- watch out for snowploughs, which may throw out snow on either side. Do not overtake them unless the lane you intend to use has been cleared
- be prepared for the road conditions changing over relatively short distances.

Drive extremely carefully when the roads are icy. Avoid sudden actions as these could cause a skid. You should

- drive at a slow speed in as high a gear as possible; accelerate and brake very gently
- drive particularly slowly on bends where skids are more likely. Brake progressively on the straight before you reach a bend. Having slowed down, steer smoothly round the bend, avoiding sudden actions
- check your grip on the road surface when there is snow or possibly ice by choosing a safe place to brake gently. If the steering feels unresponsive this may indicate ice and your vehicle losing its grip on the road.



Windy Weather

High sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist or motorcyclist off course. This can happen at open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in hedges.

In very windy weather your vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Fog

Before entering fog check your mirrors then slow down. If the word 'Fog' is shown on a roadside signal or overhead gantry but the road is clear, be prepared for a bank of fog or drifting patchy fog ahead. Even if it seems to be clearing, you can suddenly find yourself in thick fog.

Hot Weather

Keep your vehicle well ventilated to avoid drowsiness. Be aware that the road surface may become soft or if it rains after a dry spell it may become slippery. These conditions could affect your steering and braking.

CONTACTS

Further information on Road Safety may be obtained from the DOE Road Safety Education Offices located at the following addresses:-

Belfast Education and Library Board Area

c/o 40 Academy Street
Belfast
BT1 2NQ
Tel: 028 9050 8181

North Eastern Education and Library Board Area

County Hall
182 Galgorm Road
Ballymena
BT42 1HN
Tel: 028 2564 4311

South Eastern Education and Library Board Area

Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
Belfast
BT8 8JL
Tel: 028 9025 3123

Southern Education and Library Board Area

Library Headquarters
1 Markethill Road
Armagh
BT60 1NR
Tel: 028 3752 0773

Western Education and Library Board Area

Lisnagelvin Crown Building
2 Crescent Road
Lisnagelvin
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