

Driving in the Rain

Toolbox Talk



Driving in rain can be treacherous. The most important thing for drivers to remember is to slow down, because it takes longer to stop in wet weather. In rainy conditions, pedestrians, animals, and other obstacles are extremely hard to spot and even harder to avoid.

Follow these tips for driving safely in rain:

Before You Get on the Road

- If possible, do not drive during heavy thunderstorms. Large flashes of lightning can temporarily blind and disorient drivers, and high winds and heavy rain can create deadly driving conditions.
- Maintain proper tire pressure and tread, and replace tires when needed.
- Replace old or brittle wiper blades.
- Turn your headlights on in rainy, gloomy, foggy, or overcast conditions to help you see the road and to help other drivers see you.

While You Are on the Road

- Slow down. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration advises reducing your speed by a third on wet roads.
- Avoid hard braking if possible; instead, take your foot off the accelerator and brake lightly to stop the vehicle slowly. Be extra alert to brake lights ahead of you.
- Try not to make sharp or quick turns.
- Maintain longer following distance. In wet weather, increase the three-second rule.
- Stay toward the middle lanes – water tends to pool in outside lanes.
- Watch out for places where floodwater collects, such as low-lying roads next to streams, and dips under rail or highway bridges.
- When you come to a flooded road, turn around – don't drown. Never drive through water if you can't see the ground through it, and avoid off-road driving. Driving through deep water can also damage a vehicle's mechanical and electrical systems.

- Watch the contours of the road, including fences, trees, hedges, and buildings on the side of the road ahead. If they appear to be unnaturally low, slow down at once, because the road is probably flooded.
- Don't follow large trucks or buses too closely; the spray created by their large tires can reduce visibility.
- Drive in the tracks of a vehicle ahead of you.
- Turn off cruise control.
- Never drive beyond the limits of visibility. The glare of oncoming lights, amplified by rain on the windshield, can cause temporary loss of visibility and increase driver fatigue.

What to Do if You Hydroplane

Hydroplaning – when tires lose contact with the road – happens when the water in front of the tires builds up faster than the vehicle's weight can push water out of the way. The water pressure causes the vehicle to rise up and slide on a thin layer of water between the tires and the road, putting you in danger of skidding or drifting out of the lane.

Three main factors contribute to hydroplaning:

Vehicle speed. As you increase your speed, wet traction is considerably reduced. Because hydroplaning can result in a complete loss of traction and vehicle control, you should always reduce speed when driving in wet weather.

Water depth. The deeper the water, the sooner you will lose traction. Even thin water layers can cause a loss of traction, including at low speeds.

Tire tread depth. Tire experts can measure tread depth with a special gauge, and recommend checking tread depth every few months.

If you find yourself hydroplaning or skidding:

- do not brake or turn suddenly;
- ease your foot off the gas until the vehicle slows and you can feel traction on the road again; and
- turn your steering wheel in the direction of the skid.

As you recover control:

- gently straighten the wheels; and
- if you need to brake in an older vehicle, do it gently with a light pumping action. If your vehicle has anti-lock brakes, brake normally, because the vehicle's computer will mimic the pumping action.

