

Safer Driving This Winter



- **Diesel** - Can become waxy and unusable below -15°C. Some additives can lower this temperature. If possible, garage your vehicle in extreme cold.
- **General** - Check oil level, battery, lights, and tyre tread and pressures

More advice for Winter driving

- Double or even triple your normal stopping distance from the vehicle in front.
- Plan your journey around busier roads as they are more likely to have been gritted.
- On motorways stay in the clearest lane where possible, away from slush and ice. Keep within the clear tyre tracks if you can.
- Stay in a higher gear for better control.
- As conditions improve make sure your foglights are only on if necessary – they can dazzle other drivers.
- In falling snow use dipped headlights to make yourself visible to others (especially pedestrians)

Preparation

- Check the weather in advance – don't ignore police warnings about closed roads.
- Make sure you have an emergency kit so you are prepared in the event of a breakdown. This should include a torch, food for energy, water and a blanket. On longer journeys always let someone know you have set off and tell them your planned route.
- Ensure your mobile is charged up so you can make a call in an emergency – but don't use it when driving!
- Do a proper Winter check of your vehicle, looking at washer fluid, de-icer/scraper and tyres.

The main tip is to keep your speed right - not too fast so that you risk losing control, but not so slow that you risk losing momentum when you need it – and brake, steer and accelerate as smoothly as possible. Always start gently from a stationary position and avoid high engine revs. If you get yourself into a skid the main thing to remember is to take your foot off the accelerator and steer, never use the brake as this may lock up your wheels resulting in total loss of control.

Protecting Your Car for the Winter

- **Engine/cooling system** - Check antifreeze levels. A 50/50 mix of antifreeze to water will protect the engine down to -34°C.
- **Handbrake** - Check for damage to handbrake cable covering. Cables should be changed if water has penetrated.
- **Washers and wipers** - A 50/50 mix of additive to water is needed in very cold weather. Switch off wipers when parked in frost - doing so prevents damaging blades or overheating the wiper motor when the car is started.
- **Locks** - Oil door and boot locks and spray with water repellent to prevent freezing. Similarly for bonnet and fuel cap.

With snow and ice affecting many parts of the country **Road Safety GB North East** has issued advice for safe Winter driving to ensure that you keep safe when driving this Winter.

Follow these tips and safety advice in order to make your Winter driving incident free...

Avoiding a Skid

Skidding on ice is the main concern for those driving in freezing conditions. Quite often drivers do not anticipate the impact that snow and ice can have on the handling to your vehicle.

Quick Check - Top 10 Winter Driving Tips

1. Always carry a survival pack in the car, including food, water and a blanket. This should include extra warm clothes.
2. Ensure your phone battery is fully charged and you have an in-car charger.
3. Put a shovel in your boot – in case you need to dig yourself out of trouble.
4. Consider fitting Winter tyres, but even if you don't, have your summer tyres checked. Winter driving means that tyres should have no less than 3mm remaining tread.
5. Have your battery checked. Batteries have to work extra hard in the cold and are more likely to fail.
6. Make sure your windscreen washer fluid is topped up with the correct concentration of screenwash. Windscreens get particularly dirty in the Winter months and screenwash will help prevent the liquid from freezing.
7. Have your coolant checked – the antifreeze needs to protect your engine against the lowest of temperatures.
8. Have your air-con system serviced. It's not just for summer – an effective air-con system will demist windscreens much more quickly, helping visibility.
9. Adjust your driving style to the conditions – be sensible in the rain, snow and ice.
10. Above all, in bad conditions consider whether your journey is really necessary.

For further information, advice and guidance on Winter driving and all other Road Safety related matters, please contact your Local Authority Road Safety section.

Road Safety GB
North East