

Driving in Bad Weather



Revised: November 2018



**Safer
Scotland**
Scottish
Government

Driving through ice and snow

- Your stopping distance is increased 10 times when driving in snow and ice
- Drive at a slow speed in as high a gear as possible; accelerate and brake very gently
- It is not always obvious that the road is icy. Look for clues such as ice on the pavement or on your windscreen. If your tyres are making virtually no noise on the road, it could be a sign that you are driving on ice
- Do not brake heavily – it will just lock your wheels and you will skid further, consider changing to a lower gear
- Clear any snow on the roof of the vehicle before you drive off. It can slip down over the windscreen and obscure your view



- In severe cold or snowy conditions, look out for winter service vehicles spreading salt or using snow ploughs. They will have flashing amber beacons and may be travelling at slower speeds.
- Don't overtake unless it is safe to do so as there may be uncleared snow on the road ahead

Through the Traffic Scotland website it is possible to monitor the progress of gritting operations across the trunk road network. All the information you need on trunk road gritting can be found using the link below:

<http://trafficscotland.org/wintertreatment/>

General safety advice is available at:

<http://trafficscotland.org/news/story.aspx?id=13126>

Further advice about driving in bad weather is available in the Highway Code

Driving in the rain

- When the road is wet, it can take twice as long to stop. Slow down and maintain a safe distance from the vehicle in front
- If your vehicle loses its grip, or “aquaplanes” on surface water, take your foot off the accelerator to slow down. Do not brake or steer suddenly because you have no control of the steering or brakes

Floods

- Try to avoid driving through surface water as you might flood your engine. Avoid the deepest water which is usually nearest the kerb
- If you have to drive through floods, drive slowly using first gear and try to keep the engine revving at a high rate. Move forward continuously to avoid stalling the engine. If driving an automatic vehicle, engage and hold in a low gear
- Check your mirror and test your brakes after driving through water, to make sure they are still working properly



Be particularly vigilant for pedestrians and cyclists during winter weather. They may be more difficult to see and have trouble seeing you. When driving through puddles or wet areas, be prepared to slow down or stop to avoid splashing and causing distress

Driving in windy weather

- High-sided vehicles and caravans are particularly affected by windy weather but strong gusts can also blow a smaller vehicle, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course
- This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong crosswinds, or when passing bridges, high-sided vehicles or gaps in trees
- If towing an empty curtain-sided trailer, leave the curtains open to make your vehicle less vulnerable to crosswinds
- Be aware that other vehicles and debris could unexpectedly be blown into your pathway

Driving with a low sun

- Dazzle from sun can be dangerous. Always keep a pair of sunglasses (prescription if needed) in your vehicle for use in bright sunshine, especially if the sun is low or reflecting off a wet road
- Make sure you keep your windscreen clean



Driving in fog

- Drive very slowly using dipped headlights so other drivers can see you
- If it is really foggy (less than 100m visibility), then switch your fog lights and rear high-intensity lights on. Remember to switch them off when visibility improves
- Do not hang on the tail-lights of the vehicle in front. This gives you a false sense of security and means you may be driving too close
- Fog is often patchy so try not to speed up as visibility improves. You could suddenly find yourself back in thick fog further up the road

Darker evenings and mornings

- Switch on lights as soon as it starts to get dark
- In urban areas use dipped headlights. Use full beam on other roads at night but dip them when there is someone in front or coming towards you
- Be aware that pedestrians are harder to spot in the dark and may not be visible until they are very close. In particular, take care when driving near schools and in residential areas, where children may be walking and cycling. These road users are very vulnerable as they are both hard to spot in the dark and may act unpredictably
- Slow down. If you hit someone at 20mph they have a 90% chance of survival, compared to 50% at 30mph



A safer, less stressful journey

There are lots of simple things you can do to make your journey safer and less stressful during severe weather, such as checking your route for delays before you set out, taking an alternative route if you need to, taking an emergency kit and adapting your driving style to the conditions.

When freezing temperatures are forecast, you'll see our winter fleet out and about treating the roads with salt. Despite the high level of service provided, sudden weather changes occur and motorists should be aware that access to the road network may not always be possible.

For up-to-the-minute traffic information visit www.trafficscotland.org or download the Traffic Scotland mobile apps.

You can also listen to Traffic Scotland Radio or call the Traffic Customer Care Line on **0800 028 1414**.

Keep a close eye on weather information specific to your journey by using the Met Office website: www.metoffice.gov.uk. The Met Office issues warnings for: rain; snow; wind; thunderstorms; lightning; fog; and ice, based on the likelihood of them occurring and the potential impact on conditions.

Each warning has a colour: **Red**, **Amber** or **Yellow** – along with a description of the likely impact for the public.



Before your journey

Pay extra attention to planning your journey in bad weather. Before travelling you should:

- check the weather forecast and road conditions
- consider whether you need to travel right now or if you can wait until the weather improves
- consider alternative routes
- consider alternative modes of transport
- allow extra time for your journey
- ensure that your vehicle is ready for a journey in poor weather
- carry an emergency kit
- consider what changes you need to make to your driving style to suit the weather or conditions
- tell someone at your destination what route you are taking and when you expect to arrive
- visit the [Traffic Scotland website](#) to identify any problems on trunk roads



Before you set off

- It is vitally important to make sure your vehicle is adequately maintained and that brakes, tyres, lights, batteries, windscreens and wiper blades are in good condition
- Tyres are the only point of contact with the road and if they are worn or incorrectly inflated then they have less grip and can significantly increase stopping distances in the event of an emergency
- The minimum legal tread depth is 1.6mm, but you should consider changing tyres before they get near to 1.6mm as tyres with a greater tread depth perform better in poor conditions
- All windows should be demisted and fully cleared of any frost, snow or ice
- Check that wiper blades are not worn and are capable of clearing the windscreen correctly
- Keep fuel tank levels high, ensuring you have more than enough fuel to complete your journey, allowing for unexpected delays and greater fuel use than usual
- Check brakes, lights, oil and washer fluid levels (add winter screen wash to your washer bottle to stop the water from freezing)

Police travel advice

Transport Scotland and Police Scotland have developed a severe weather information strategy to warn and inform road users when significant disruption to the road network is expected during extreme weather.

The travel advice and information service will kick in when severe weather is forecast, and information will be provided in advance of, and during, any severe weather event.

Advice will be classed in three stages depending on the severity of the weather:

- **Travel with caution** – Police are advising conditions for road travel may be hazardous and drivers should exercise extra caution
- **High risk of disruption for road journeys** – Police are advising there is a high risk of disruption for road journeys and drivers are likely to experience significant delays
- **Avoid travel on the roads** – Police are advising drivers to avoid travel on the roads. Drivers who choose to drive should expect severe delays of several hours or more

Advice is provided through Transport Scotland's network of Variable Message Signs, the Traffic Scotland website (including the internet radio service), Twitter, smartphone applications, radio travel information broadcasts and the Traffic Scotland Customer Careline.



Emergency kits

Keep an emergency kit in the car:

- ice scraper and de-icer
- torch and spare batteries
- warm clothes and a blanket
- a pair of boots
- first-aid kit
- battery jump leads
- a shovel for snow
- a tow rope
- food and a warm drink in a flask
- sunglasses to help you see in low sun
- make sure your mobile phone is fully-charged
- a map for any unplanned diversions



During your journey

Be aware of changing road and weather conditions, even if it is a road you use regularly.

Remember it is dangerous and illegal to use a handheld mobile phone or device while driving.

You may need to change the way you drive in bad weather:

- reduce speed
- increase stopping distances
- avoid sudden acceleration and braking
- use dipped headlights
- A minimum break of at least 15 minutes after every two hours of driving is recommended
- do not pass closed snow gates or 'Road Closed' signs, as it may be dangerous and an offence to do so
- listen to radio travel bulletins
- observe information on Variable Message Signs

Watch out for locations where you may need to drive more carefully. Some common examples are:

- changes in road elevation or exposure
- where the road passes under or over a bridge
- where things at the side of the road shade the carriageway (e.g. trees, bridges or other structures)
- where there is less traffic use (e.g. slip roads)
- bends in the road where there is a greater risk of loss of control. Reduce your speed when approaching



During your journey remember this critical question:

If I had to brake suddenly in an emergency, could I stop safely within the distance I can clearly see ahead of me?

200+



gritters clear Scotland's trunk roads during the winter

Winter treatments are a mixture of salt and brine

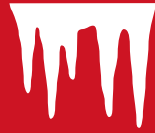


transportscotland.gov.uk

for more information follow @transcotland | for journey planning @trafficscotland | #winterinfo

We spread salt on the road to stop ice forming

Ice forms on untreated wet roads at 0°C



The coldest temperature ever recorded in Scotland was - 27.2°C



95,000 TONNES

of salt on average are used each year on our trunk roads

42 depots manage the gritters and spreading



We closely monitor the weather using road sensors, radars and weather cameras as well as the forecast

400+ cameras monitor road conditions



During winter our gritters can cover the same distance as twice around the world weekly



The tallest snowman in the world is over 37 metres tall



Traveline Scotland

Provides up to date public transport timetable information to get you to your destination by the quickest route.



The Traveline Scotland app (in association with Traffic Scotland) includes:

- A journey planner showing public transport options between any two locations in Scotland, featuring all bus, coach, rail, Glasgow Subway and ferry routes
- Departure boards for buses and departure times for Scottish ferry terminals and Glasgow Subway stations
- News and notices affecting public transport services
- Contact details for all Scottish public transport operators



Useful Links

- www.scotland.police.uk
- www.trafficscotland.org
- www.transport.gov.uk
- www.readyscotland.org
- www.metoffice.gov.uk
- www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code