

# fact sheet | driving in the wet



**The onset of winter brings on a change in road conditions and, with it, the need for motorists to adopt a 'wet weather attitude'.**

## **Aquaplaning**

One of the most dangerous conditions faced by motorists during the winter months is a wet road. If you're travelling at high speed over a road covered with water, there's the possibility that your vehicle could aquaplane. This occurs when your tyres glide over the water rather than separate it, resulting in a loss of traction, which could cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

If this happens to you it means you were travelling too fast for the conditions. To reduce your chances of aquaplaning the message is simple – slow down in the wet.

However, should you find yourself in this situation there are a few things you should remember:

## **Dos**

Take your foot off the accelerator and reduce your car's speed.

When you have regained control, drive slowly through any water on the road.

## **Don'ts**

Never slam on the brakes, as this may increase your chances of skidding out of control.

## **Driving through flood waters**

In wet weather, it's also important to be aware of local road conditions and areas that don't drain well after heavy rain.

If you know a road is prone to flooding, alter your driving route to avoid it.

If, however, you are confronted by a flooded road, and no alternative routes are available, be sure to check the water depth before proceeding. Look for flood water depth markers. If there aren't any nearby, proceed with extreme caution.

Use the bottom of your radiator fan blades as a benchmark. If the water is higher than that, it's too deep and you should stop and turn around.

Should you decide to proceed, you risk causing damage to your car's engine or radiator. This is because the fan will act as a propeller, sending water all over the electrical system. On top of that, the pressure of the water on the fan blades can bend or break the blades, causing damage to the radiator.

If it's not too deep, proceed with caution, driving very slowly. Once you have passed through the water crossing on to dry land, apply light pressure to the brakes over the next 100 metres to help them dry out. After you've travelled about one kilometre, apply the brakes heavily a couple of times, just to make sure they are operating effectively – remember to check that the road is clear first. It's also a good idea to check the underside of the engine for any debris that may be attached.

Finally, remember to dry out any wet carpets, mats and underfelt as a precaution against mould and rust.

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## **Battling fog and rain**

Driving through fog and rain can be hazardous and requires extra care.

In these conditions, reduce your speed to a level where you can comfortably see the road and traffic ahead. Keep in mind that the signed speed limit is the maximum safe speed in good driving conditions.

When visibility is poor, turn your headlights on – not on high beam, as this will dazzle other drivers.

In fact it's actually easier to see in foggy conditions on low beam.

Make sure that you allow several car lengths between you and the car in front to allow for greater reaction time and stopping distance.

## **Tyre safety**

On wet, slippery roads your tyres are especially important in keeping you safe. After all, they are all that's between you

and the car in front, so allow greater reaction time and stopping distance.

You must have a minimum of 1.6mm of tread over the entire tread area (1.5mm is roughly equal to the depth of a match head – use this to check if your tread is adequate). Make sure all the tyres, including the spare, have adequate tread. If any are worn, replace them.

## **Windscreen wipers**

Before the winter months set in, make sure your windscreen wipers are operating correctly and the blades haven't split or perished. If your wipers are leaving smears across the windscreen, replace them.

Why not make checking your wiper blades part of your regular routine when washing your car? All you need to do is lift the blade from the screen, rinse with clean water and at the same time look for signs of deterioration.