

braking and steering will then become effective and you can re-gain full control.

Avoiding skidding

The main cause is the driver. If you drive within the limits of the road and traffic and weather conditions you should be able to avoid skidding. The cause of a skid is down to four things: excessive speed, harsh steering, harsh acceleration or sudden braking. If you take into account the driving conditions along with raising your vision, awareness and space management you will reduce the risk of skidding and be removing the cause. Many vehicles are fitted with a range of safety features to increase stability and therefore you should familiarise yourself with the manufacturer's guidelines.

Antilock braking systems

ABS is fitted to most new cars as standard; it prevents the wheels from locking when firm braking is applied. Braking is at its most effective point just before the wheels lock; it is at that point when (ABS) activates and automatically releases the brakes and reapplies them a number of times per second. This will not reduce your stopping distance but will allow steering to be effective and pull the vehicle up in a straight line. As a driver it's important that your are

aware if the vehicle you are driving is fitted with (ABS) as the braking technique is different to that of a vehicle without (ABS).

High winds

Great care should be taken when driving in strong winds as it can blow high-sided vehicles, motorcyclists and cyclists off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong crosswinds, or when crossing bridges.

Breakdowns

In the event of a breakdown think about your safety and the safety of other road users. Avoid standing in the road or between vehicles. Never wait in your vehicle, only return to it if you feel your safety is threatened. Try to get your vehicle off the carriageway if it's safe to do so. Ensure you switch the hazard warning lights on to warn other road users. Keep the bonnet closed if its raining. Full information on breakdowns can be found in the Highway Code.

Although your vehicle maybe fit for use, are you fit to drive?

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Are you prepared for winter driving?

Dorset County Council



Improving the quality of life for people in Dorset, now and for the future



Winter Driving

As the evenings draw in you should think about winter driving. Few drivers take time to think about adapting their driving style to the changes in weather conditions as winter sets in.

Leave more time for your journey.

As drivers we should consider the following before travelling:

Vehicle Safety Checks

Under construction and use regulations it's the driver's legal responsibility to ensure that the vehicle they are driving is roadworthy. A vehicle safety check should be completed prior to making a journey as the driver would be the one who would receive a fine and points if the vehicle had a defect. These checks include fuel, lights, fluid levels, tyres and wipers. If it's a council vehicle it may have a defect book that must be completed by the driver. Further information can be found in vehicle safety guidance notes on staffnet.

See and be seen

Switch your headlights on as soon as you notice visibility is starting to reduce. Be the first to put lights on and the last to switch them off. Ensure you check your lights are working prior to any journey you are making, you will use lights more in winter so the risk of a bulb failing is higher; it's a good idea to carry spare bulbs. Keeping light lenses clean will ensure that your vehicle is seen.

A build up of spray and dirt can reduce the output of headlights by up to 90%.

Tyres

The area of tyre that is in contact with the road surface at any time is about the size of a CD case, so it's important that you check your tyres on a regular basis. The more mileage you do the more often you will need to check them.

Tyres should be checked as part of a daily inspection. Most tyres are now fitted with tread wear indicators that will indicate how low the tread depth is. The legal minimum tread depth for a car is 1.6mm across the centre three-quarters of the tyre, around the whole circumference. In winter it is recommended that you have at least 3mm of tread depth to deal with weather conditions and to reduce aquaplaning. The less tread on the tyre, the less grip on the road and the longer the stopping distance becomes. The tyre walls should be inspected for any damage such as cuts and bulges. Tyre pressures should be checked as uneven tyre pressures can affect vehicle stability and fuel consumption. Don't forget to check the spare wheel at the same time.

Visibility

Check your windscreen washer bottle to make sure you have sufficient water to clean your windscreen; you can add a cleaning solution that helps to clean any build up of traffic film. Under construction and use regulations it is an offence not to have water

in the washer bottle. It is a **driver's** responsibility to have adequate vision out of all windows of the vehicle they are driving, ensure that all windows are clear of any ice, snow etc. Check the windscreen wiper blades are in good condition.

Fog

When driving in fog use dipped headlights to avoid the light beam bouncing back off the fog towards you. Only use fog lights when visibility is less than 100 metres as it is an offence to use them if visibility is greater than that. It can also mask your brake lights and dazzle the driver following you. Remember to switch them off when visibility improves.

Snow and ice

Consider if your journey is essential; listen to local weather reports for updates. If you do drive, try to stay on main roads rather than side roads and carry emergency equipment with you. Take extreme care as conditions can change quickly and over a short distance. Maintain a larger than normal separation gap between you and the vehicle ahead, so that you have more time to react. Drive to the conditions making use of gentle acceleration and braking, avoid any sudden actions such as harsh braking, steering & acceleration as these are the main causes of skidding. It may be necessary to use a higher gear to move off so that you have more control. Further information can be found in the Highway Code.

Rain, surface water, floods

When driving in rain be sure you use dipped headlights never drive on sidelights. On a dry road you should have at least a two second separation gap between you and the vehicle ahead. On a wet road this doubles to four seconds and in ice and snow up to ten times. This gap should be increased when driving larger vehicles. Using the correct separation distance not only improves your safety, it will improve your vision around the vehicle ahead and reduces the amount of spray hitting your windscreen. Take care on wet roads as what may appear to be a puddle could be a pothole, and may cause damage to your vehicle or affect your steering and control.

Try to avoid driving through floods. Keep to the highest point and keep your speed low. Consider using a low gear to avoid creating a bow wave. The age of your vehicle will depend on which technique to use, refer to the manufacturer's guidelines and advice. Once clear of the water test your brakes to see that they are working and to dry them out. Repeat this again after a short time. Ensure the road behind is clear before doing so.

Aquaplaning is a build up of water between the tyres and the road surface; whether you brake or steer, the vehicle will not respond. In this situation ease off the accelerator to reduce speed (do not brake) and avoid steering. This will allow the vehicle to slow down and the tyres to re-gain grip on the road surface;