

Driving Safely in extreme weather

Extreme weather conditions and icy roads can make driving more difficult, especially in winter. By following the Highways Agency's advice you can help to make your journey safer and reduce delays for everyone.

Be prepared for bad weather

Make sure you don't get caught out when severe weather strikes.

Check and service your vehicle

You can reduce your chances of breaking down by regularly servicing your car.

You should also:

- top up anti-freeze and screenwash
- check for wear and tear on wiper blades (replace them as soon as they start to smear rather than clean windows)
- make sure your battery is fully charged (batteries last between two and four years - replace yours if it's no longer reliable)
- keep tyre pressure at the manufacturer's recommended level and check you have at least 3 millimetres of tread
- wipe dirt and spray off headlamps and make sure all bulbs are working

Carry an emergency kit

A basic kit should include:

- map
- jump leads for the car battery
- torch
- warning triangle
- ice scraper and de-icer
- first-aid kit
- warm clothes

If you are planning a long trip or if severe weather is forecast, you may want to add:

- a shovel (if there's a chance of snow)
- a pair of boots
- a blanket
- any medication you need to take regularly
- food and a thermos with a hot drink
- Sunglasses are useful too, because of the glare in snowy conditions.

Plan your journey and check the latest weather and travel advice

Ask yourself whether you really need to travel - or if you can delay your journey until conditions improve.

If you must travel, plan your journey carefully.

Before you set off:

- check live traffic information online by following the link below
- plan your route, including breaks at service areas if you are doing a long motorway journey

As you travel:

- listen to travel news and weather on local radio (if you have a digital radio set it to Traffic Radio)
- you can check conditions on the road ahead using Highways Agency Traffic Information Points at service areas and other venues
- [Plan your journey](#)
- [Get traffic information on the move](#)
- [Find motorway service areas in England](#)

Drive to suit the conditions

Stopping distances

When roads are slippery it can take you up to 10 times longer to stop.

Reduce your speed and drive with extra care, even if roads have been gritted.

In the most severe weather conditions you should only drive if you really need to - otherwise it may be better to delay your journey until the weather improves.

Even after roads have been treated in winter, driving conditions may remain challenging, especially if the road location and layout mean there is a high risk of ice.

Be aware that ice forms more easily on:

- hilly or exposed roads
- roads that pass under or over a bridge
- roads shaded by trees or buildings

If you start to skid:

- press the clutch
- steer into the skid
- as you straighten, steer back along the road

Don't let winter turn you into a bad driver - check the Highway Code information on 'Driving in adverse weather conditions'. This section of the Highway Code covers driving in:

- wet weather
- icy and snowy weather
- windy weather
- fog
- hot weather
- [Driving in adverse weather conditions \(Highway Code\)](#)

You can also download the information covered here and in the Highway Code in the form of the Highways Agency leaflet 'Driving in severe weather'.

[Download Download Highways Agency leaflet on driving in severe weather \(PDF, 1714K\)](#)

If things go wrong

However carefully you plan your journey, things can go wrong. An accident or bad weather could mean that a road is closed for a time.

If you find yourself on a stretch of motorway that is closed:

- stay in the car and listen to traffic news (the Highways Agency feeds up-to-date news to local radio) - tune in by pressing 'TA' on your radio or, if you have a digital radio, tune to Traffic Radio

If you find yourself in a queue on the road:

- check the electronic message signs for real-time information and instructions

If there is an incident on the road that means traffic cannot move:

- Highways Agency Traffic Officers or Incident Support Unit staff will come to the scene to put emergency plans into action - you should stay in the car and follow their instructions
- [Electronic message signs](#)
- [Highways Agency Traffic Officers](#)

Other useful links

- [Weather information from the Met Office](#)
- [What to do if you break down on the motorway](#)