



Drive Smart and Stay Safe This Winter

With the colder weather upon us, driving conditions start to get dangerous. Although staying inside with a nice hot drink may appeal, there are still times when you will have no choice but to drive in poor conditions. When Christmas cheer has already taken its toll on your bank account, the last thing you want is to spend more money than necessary on fuel. With this mind, we have prepared some handy hints to see how you can avoid accidents, and overspending, this winter.

Be prepared

When it comes to winter driving, careful planning and Smarter Driving can go a long way.

What to have with you:

- ✔ **Warm clothes, waterproof boots** and a **blanket** in case you're stopped for a while.
- ✔ **A shovel or small trowel.** If you are driving in heavy snow, or if it's forecast, consider packing **a shovel**; even a **small trowel** could prove useful for clearing the snow around your vehicle.
- ✔ **Sunglasses** They may not be the first thing you think of when driving in the middle of winter, but the sun is lower at this time of year which can cause more glare and make it harder to see properly, especially if the road is wet.

Before you leave

- ✔ **Check** both the weather and the traffic reports before you depart.
- ✔ **Changing your journey time** by a few hours can make the difference between a clear route to your destination and hours stuck in traffic. Heavy traffic makes for an unpleasant journey, and lots of starting and stopping uses up extra fuel.
- ✔ **Allow plenty of time.** If you know there's going to be bad weather, add extra time to your journey so you don't have to rush.
- ✔ **Make sure your coolant and your screen wash have antifreeze.** If the coolant freezes it is likely to do serious damage.
- ✔ **Clear windows, mirrors and lights of snow and ice before moving off.** Do this manually rather than idling the car with the heater on as this wastes fuel. Even two minutes of idling uses up enough fuel to drive a mile. Use an ice scraper for the outside and a smear-free cloth such as chamois leather for mist on the inside.



Driving in poor weather

Smarter Driving does more than bring your fuel bills down; it makes your drive safer too. One of the main problems with bad weather is water on the road, which can cause you to lose your grip, so remember:

- ✔ **Slow down** – the slower you go, the shorter your stopping distances will be.
- ✔ **Drive smoothly** to reduce the chance of skidding.
- ✔ **Avoid harsh acceleration.**
- ✔ **Avoid suddenly changing direction** as this may cause you to skid.
- ✔ **Brake gently or decelerate using engine braking by easing off the accelerator. Try to keep moving, even if only slowly, when approaching queues.** This is a useful technique in traffic as not only does moving off from a complete stop increase your chances of losing traction, it also uses a lot more fuel than just maintaining momentum.
- ✔ **Stick to a high gear** especially when going uphill.
- ✔ **Check your mirrors regularly**, especially in high winds when overtaking or being overtaken, as both you and other road users could easily veer off path.
- ✔ **Keep both hands on the steering wheel.** Bad weather can make it much harder to see flaws in road surfaces, so use both hands, even when driving for long periods on a straight road, so you have optimal control should you encounter something unexpected.
- ✔ **Test your brakes** if you've just driven through flood water before you start speeding up again.

Look after your car

Good maintenance schedules can save lives as well as a lot of inconvenience. Breaking down and getting stranded can be annoying at the best of times but in cold weather it can be miserable and dangerous. So if your car is due a service soon or it's time to change the tyres, don't delay it any longer.

Consider winter tyres. Winter tyres are not for everyone as you cannot use them all year round but they do bring benefits in temperatures under 7°C. If you live in hilly parts of the country or do a lot of driving at night/ early morning, they may be well worth thinking about. They offer better grip below 7°C which is useful in rural areas where the roads will be gritted less. If you are still unsure if winter tyres are right for you, talk to one of our dedicated, impartial advisors.