

# Drive safely this winter.

Ready for winter?



There are lots of simple things we can all do to make journeys safer and less stressful during really bad weather. Taking a bit of time to think now and plan ahead for the weather could make life much easier.

## Before your journey.

It can really help to plan your journey in bad weather. Before travelling you should:

- check the weather forecast and road conditions
- think if you really need to travel right now. Could you wait until the weather improves?
- think about alternative routes and other modes of transport
- allow extra time for your journey
- make sure your vehicle's ready for a journey in poor weather
- consider fitting winter tyres or snow socks to your vehicle
- carry an emergency kit
- consider whether you need to change your driving style to suit the conditions
- tell someone at your destination what time you expect to arrive
- visit the Traffic Scotland website to identify any problems on trunk roads [www.trafficscotland.org](http://www.trafficscotland.org) or call the Traffic Customer Care Line on 0800 028 1414

## Before you drive.

It is important to check that your vehicle is well maintained and serviced. You should:

- make sure the battery's reliable (and replace if it's not)
- check your tyres have plenty of tread depth and are at the correct pressure
- keep your lights clean and check the bulbs
- keep your windscreen clean (dirty windows and mirrors can make it hard to see in low winter sun).
- replace worn wiper blades
- add anti-freeze to the radiator and winter additive to the windscreen washer bottles
- before driving off, make sure your windows, lights and mirrors are clear of mist, ice and snow (inside and out)

## During your journey.

Be aware of changing road and weather conditions, even if it's a road you use regularly. When the weather's really bad, you may need to change the way you drive. You should:

- reduce speed in bad weather
- increase stopping distances
- avoid sudden acceleration and braking
- use dipped headlights in poor conditions
- take breaks every two or three hours
- do not pass closed snow gates
- listen to radio travel bulletins
- check the information on roadside message boards

You should also keep an eye 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
- things at the side of the road that 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



### Driving through ice and snow.

- your stopping distance increases ten times when driving in snow and ice
- select second gear when pulling away, easing your foot off the clutch gently to avoid wheel-spin
- it's not always obvious that the road's icy – look for clues like ice on the pavement or on your windscreen
- don't brake too hard – it'll just lock up your wheels and make you skid further
- clear any snow on the roof of the vehicle before you drive off, as it can slip down over the windscreen and obscure your view
- look out for winter service vehicles spreading salt or using snow ploughs

### Some essentials for your car.

Here are some simple things you should keep in your car, in case the weather turns nasty:

- a blanket
- warm winter clothing (including boots)
- ice scraper and de-icer
- battery jump leads
- map for any unplanned diversions
- a first-aid kit
- a torch and spare batteries
- a mobile phone and charger
- a shovel for snow
- food and drink that will last (and a warm drink in a flask before each journey)



## A few facts on winter tyres.

In countries where severe winter weather is more common, it's normal for drivers to switch to winter tyres during the cold season. In fact, this is increasingly becoming a legal requirement in many parts of Europe. The benefits of winter tyres are not restricted to snow and ice covered roads either. Low temperature alone can seriously lessen the performance of standard tyres. So it may now be time for us all to think about winter tyres.

### What's the difference?

The most obvious difference is the tread pattern. Winter tyres have more grooves and narrow slits across the tread area, which give better grip on snow and ice.

Winter tyres also have a different rubber compound which stays flexible and grips the road when temperatures fall well below zero. Tyres made with this compound will carry either a snowflake or a mountain as a symbol on the sidewall.

In nearly all cases, winter tyres will be available to fit onto the existing wheels of your car. However, some drivers have two sets of wheels and tyres to make the changeover easier (although this does cost more initially). To find out more about winter tyres, visit [www.tyresafe.org](http://www.tyresafe.org)

### Tyre Condition.

Whatever tyres are fitted, regular checks of tread depth and tyre pressure are even more important in winter. Your tyres' performance will be significantly reduced if the tread depth falls below 3mm. Pressure should be checked with the tyres cold (that means the car should be driven no more than a mile). And, you should set the pressure to the value specified by the vehicle manufacturer or tyre maker (if different pressures are specified for winter tyres).

Don't try to reduce pressure to increase grip. Tyres with low pressure do not have any more grip, but will be more likely to blow-out or overheat.

### Snow Socks.

A useful alternative to changing tyres is to fit snow socks. These are made of a strong fabric which is stretched to fit over the tyre. This innovative fabric then grips the snow. Snow socks can be used with standard tyres and they'll easily fit into a car boot. They're also slightly cheaper to buy than winter tyres.

# When it comes to really bad weather, doing a few small things now, could save a lot of trouble later.



If you'd like to find out anymore information, just visit [www.readyscotland.org](http://www.readyscotland.org)