

Safety Tips for Rainy Weather

Rain is blamed for thousands of accidents yearly. Many of these crashes are preventable but are caused by drivers who don't realize that fair and foul weather driving is fundamentally different.

When the road is wet, the film of water on the asphalt causes tires to lose traction. Less obvious is the fact that rain reduces driver perception, it's harder to see through the rain, and also decreases visibility through its action on headlights, windshields, and the road itself. While most people know to slow down in the rain, there are definitely other tips that will help keep you, and those who share the road with you, from becoming a statistic.

- **Exercise extreme caution after a long dry spell.** During a dry period, engine oil and grease build up on the road over time. When mixed with water from a new rainfall, the road becomes extremely slick. Continued rainfall will eventually wash away the oil, but the first few hours can be the most dangerous.
- **Brake earlier and with less force** than you would normally. Not only does this increase the stopping distance between you and the car in front of you, it also lets the driver behind you know that you're slowing down. Also, be more meticulous about using turn signals, so that other drivers know your intentions, and take turns and curves with less speed than you would in dry conditions.
- **Don't use cruise control.** If you hydroplane, there's the chance your car could actually accelerate. Cruise control also allows drivers to be less vigilant and to take their foot away from the pedals – not a great idea when reaction time is so important.
- **Don't attempt to cross running water.** Don't end up like those folks on the nightly news who had to abandon their cars to Mother Nature.

- If you start to hydroplane, don't brake suddenly or turn the wheel, or you might spin into a skid. Release the gas pedal slowly and steer straight until the car regains traction. If you must brake, tap the brake pedal (unless you have antilock brakes, in which case you can put your foot down).

Safe driving in the rain requires you to take some precautionary measures:

- Stay on top of your car's condition, and check your brakes, tire pressures, tire tread depth, and defroster operation.
- Make sure that your wipers are in good condition and functioning properly.

Taking a few precautions and using wet-weather driving techniques will keep you from ending up sopping wet on the shoulder of the freeway, waiting for a tow truck, or worse.

Thanks to <http://www.edmunds.com> and Fredericksburg.com for all the tips and insights.

MORE INFORMATION . . .

Driving in the rain requires attention and consideration. Watch out for pedestrians. An ordinarily observant pedestrian may become distracted by fiddling with an umbrella or a rain slicker. Keep a sharp lookout for people in the road.

If you are driving on the Interstates when a sudden deluge hits, remember that state law requires headlights to be on when windshield wipers are on. Use turn signals when changing lanes or exiting the Interstate. If necessary, park in a rest area or parking lot and wait until the storm passes.