



Managing Severe Weather Conditions

Road Haulage Association

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Severe Weather

A three-tier 'alert status' system is in place for extreme weather conditions including: flooding, fog, ice, snow and high winds. The Met Office has categorised these alerts in to a colour coded system with appropriate definitions as follows;

- **Yellow: Yellow means that you should plan ahead thinking about possible travel delays, or the disruption of your day to day activities.** Severe weather is possible over the next few days and could affect you. The Met Office is monitoring the developing weather situation and you should keep an eye on the latest forecast and be aware that the weather may change or worsen.
- **Amber: If possible, goods vehicles should choose the safest route, rather than the quickest.** There is an increased likelihood of bad weather affecting you, which could potentially disrupt your plans and possibly cause travel delays, road and rail closures, interruption to power and the potential risk to life and property.
- **Red: You must avoid dangerous areas and follow the advice of the emergency services and local authorities.** Extreme weather is expected. Red means you should take action now to keep yourself and others safe from the impact of the weather. Goods vehicles should leave the road network and find a safe place to park. They must then wait until the status changes. Widespread damage, travel and power disruption and risk to life is likely.

Below we have listed some driving tips to consider if you're caught driving during bad weather. However, in the event of forecasted winter weather operators should always seek customers cooperation and manage their expectations. Pressures on the supply chain & your company are as big a risk to safety during severe weather as the weather itself. Telling people in advance that your operation may be disrupted can help to reduce time pressures, allowing you to complete the journey safely and for your customers to prepare to accept delivery.



Winter driving

Drivers are advised to have, or carry on their vehicle: de-icer spray and a good quality windscreen scraper; a shovel; waterproof and warm clothing; a hat and gloves; a blanket; a flask of tea or coffee and high-energy food such as chocolate. Other winter driving tips include:

- Ensure drive axle tyres are in good condition, with a minimum of 5mm tread depth.
- Make sure tyre pressures are regularly checked and maintained.
- Equip trucks with a lightweight shovel and suitable tow rope – consider also carrying a 25kg bag of road salt/grit to assist with traction. Maintaining a load over the drive axle of the vehicle will also aid traction.
- Drive smoothly and consistently on snow and ice and avoid harsh acceleration and braking – allow up to ten times the normal braking distance. Look well ahead and use the driveline where appropriate to slow down your vehicle.
- Drive whenever possible on fresh snow. This provides a marginally better grip than snow, which is hard-packed.

Heavy rainfall/flooding

In dangerous weather conditions such as heavy rainfall/flooding, it is best to avoid making a journey by road unless absolutely necessary. If driving in such conditions is unavoidable, be prepared. The golden rule is drive with care and caution – expect the unexpected. Further advice includes:

- Be mindful that it takes longer to stop a vehicle on wet roads so slow down and allow extra distance between you and the vehicle in front - 4 seconds at a minimum.
- Driving in such conditions will result in reduced visibility. Use dipped headlights and wipers, not parking/side lights or fog lights.
- If the road ahead is flooded choose another route - do not attempt to drive through it. Flooded roads that appear shallow could be deeper than you think. Follow recommended routes and obey signs.
- Be aware of rivers or streams that may suddenly rise and flood, for example highway dips, under bridges, and low areas.
- If a road is flooded as a result of a river bursting its banks, be aware the current could be strong enough to sweep your vehicle away.
- When entering water, go in slowly and keep a steady, even throttle - do not create a bow wave which could cut the engine.
- Check your brakes without causing danger to following traffic. After going through deep water, drive slowly with your foot on the brake pedal for a short distance - this helps to dry out the brakes.
- If you are inside a vehicle and water is rising rapidly around you, abandon the vehicle immediately – be wary of strong currents and debris.



Fog and high winds

Drivers should take great care and caution in foggy conditions, especially on motorways. When fog is present, drivers should follow the guidance detailed in the Highway Code which includes:

- Check mirrors and slow down.
- When fog is signposted, even if the road appears clear, be prepared for a bank of fog or drifting patchy fog ahead.
- Use dipped headlights and keep your distance. For visibility less than 100m use high intensity rear fog lights.
- Drivers of HGVs on motorways should always use the left hand lane in fog – also be ready to let other vehicles move into this lane at entry points and well before exit points.
- In high winds avoid exposed areas such as high level bridges, viaducts or open stretches of road, especially if you are in a high sided vehicle. If your vehicle is curtain sided, tie back the curtains if your vehicle is empty.

Further information

Operators are advised to continually check the following links for the most up-to-date travel information;

- <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/warnings> or [@metoffice](#)
- England: <http://www.trafficengland.com/> or [@HighwaysEngland](#)
- Scotland: <https://trafficscotland.org/currentincidents/> or [@TrafficScotland](#)
- Northern Ireland: <http://trafficwatchni.com> or [@TrafficwatchNI](#)
- Wales: <http://www.traffic-wales.com> or [@trafficwales](#)

If you would like more information about this guidance please contact the [Help Desk](#), [your regional office](#) or [your area manager](#).

