

TONY BARDEN SCHOOL OF MOTORING

DRIVING IN ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

RAIN

When driving in very heavy rain, it is important to be able to see, and to be seen. You can improve your visibility by keeping the windows clear using the heating system or washer/wipers. If the rain is extremely heavy, you should slow down, or if necessary stop. You can make it easier for other drivers to see you by driving on dipped headlights and keeping the lights clean. You will have to increase your following distance to two metres for each m.p.h. of your speed, and give yourself plenty of time when slowing down. ***Aquaplaning*** can be a problem if your speed is too high, or if there is a lot of water on the road surface. Good tyres and smooth use of the controls should prevent aquaplaning or skidding.

FLOODS

If you have to drive through a flooded road, you should begin by trying to assess the depth of water. If you are in doubt about being able to get through, then you should find another route. However, if the water is not too deep, then you should drive in the **centre** of the road because this is where the water is usually the shallowest. Select 1st gear and use clutch control to make the car move **very slowly**. By driving slowly you will avoid creating waves or splashing water on the electrics. Give plenty of acceleration while slipping the clutch. This will prevent water from going back up the exhaust. Once you have crossed the flood, you should dry out the brakes. This can be done by driving very slowly in 1st gear, and at the same time braking lightly with your left foot. Where conditions allow, you should also carry out a moving brake test to ensure that the brakes are working efficiently.

CROSSWINDS

Crosswinds can cause major problems for motorcyclists, cyclists, or anyone driving a high sided vehicle. Therefore if it is necessary to overtake any of these road users, you should give extra clearance. The effect of crosswinds is most noticeable in exposed areas or on high bridges. You should reduce your speed to combat the effect of the wind. When the wind is strong you may have to compensate with the steering by turning the wheel slightly against the direction of the wind. However you need to be careful when you come to a sheltered area to return the wheel to the normal position. Examples of sheltered areas would include buildings, trees, ditches or other road users.

FOG

Fog is one of the ***most dangerous*** conditions to drive in. When at all possible, **avoid driving in fog**. However if it is necessary to drive, you must ensure that you can be seen, and that you can see others. To improve your visibility, you should drive on dipped headlights. Use the heating system and demister along with the wipers to keep the windscreen clear. When visibility is seriously reduced, you should use fog lights to let others see you. However, when visibility improves, you should switch them off to avoid dazzling others.

Your following distance needs to be ***much greater*** than for normal conditions. Speed needs to be reduced so that you can stop within the distance you can see to be clear.

Parked vehicles, pedestrians, road markings and traffic signs will be much harder to see so you need to be extra careful at junctions. If you need to turn at a junction you should signal in plenty of time and roll down the window and listen for approaching traffic from any direction. When stopped, keep your foot on the brake pedal so that the lights are illuminated. Consider using the horn to warn others of your presence. You should avoid overtaking in fog even though the vehicle in front may be moving very slowly. Fog can be very patchy, and it may look safe to overtake when you are behind the vehicle, only to find that while overtaking you have hit dense fog again. Finally you should avoid parking in the street. Try to find an offroad area to leave your car. If it is necessary to park in the street, then you should leave the parking lights on and position the car in a lit up area.

SUNSHINE

Driving in heat can also cause problems for the driver and their vehicle. You need to ensure that you have enough water in the radiator to avoid overheating. Sunglasses or a visor will make it more comfortable to drive and cut down on glare. In very hot conditions the tarmac can become soft. This will effect your roadholding and cornering. A summer shower can also make the road surface slippery, because a grease forms on the road surface when the water mixes with the buildup of dust and rubber. To overcome you need to increase your following distance and brake gently. You also need to keep the water bottle topped up and use a cleaning additive to keep the windscreen clear of dead insects etc.