



Tips for Driving in Wet Weather

Exercise extreme caution after a long dry spell. During a dry period, engine oil and grease build up on the road. 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.

Allow for additional travel time. You should plan to drive at a slower pace than normal when the roads are wet. Keep in mind that traffic is likely to be moving slower as well. There's also the possibility that your preplanned route may be flooded or jammed. Whatever the case, rushing equals higher risk.

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. Take turns and curves with less speed than you would in dry conditions.

Most of America's roads are crowned in the middle, which means that the water will run off to the sides. If possible, **stay toward the middle of the road** to avoid deep standing puddles.

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.

If you see a large puddle up ahead, **drive around it or choose a different route.** Water splashing up into your car's engine compartment could damage its internal electrical systems. Also, a pothole may be hiding under the water, which can damage a wheel or knock your suspension out of alignment. If you can't gauge the depth, or if it's covering up the side curb, try to avoid it.

Don't attempt to cross running water. You will find yourself in trouble if the force of the water is greater than the weight of your vehicle. All-wheel drive isn't going to help you if your vehicle is being pushed sideways.

After you cross a puddle, **tap on your brake pedal lightly** to dry off some of the water on your rotors.

Turn on your headlights (it's the law in California), even when there's a light sprinkle. It helps you see the road, and more importantly, it helps other motorists see you. However, don't blast your high beams in the rain or fog; doing so will obscure your view further, as the light will reflect back at you off the water droplets in the air. If your car is equipped with foglights, you may find it helpful to turn these on, as they throw a little extra light on the road while making your car easier to see.

Watch out for pedestrians. An ordinarily observant pedestrian may become distracted by fiddling with an umbrella or a rain slicker. Plus, raindrops deaden sound, so the usual audio clues for measuring car distances become obscured. Keep a sharp lookout for people in the road.

If it's raining so hard that you can't see the road or the car in front of you, **pull over and wait it out.** Do not drive where you can't see.

Track the car ahead of you. Let the car ahead pave a clear path through the water.

Give a truck or bus extra distance. Their extra-large tires can create enough spray to block your vision completely. If possible, avoid passing large trucks and buses. If you must pass, do it as quickly as safety allows.

Defog your windows. Rain will quickly cause your windshield to fog up. Switch on both front and rear defrosters and make sure the air conditioning is turned on. Most cars' climate control systems will automatically engage the A/C when the windshield defrost function is selected.

If you start to hydroplane, **don't brake suddenly or turn the wheel**, as this might cause you to 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 anti-lock brakes, in which case you can put your foot down).