



Motor Risk Guidance: Driving at Work Policy

The UK weather continues to surprise us. We get temperatures that are unseasonably warm, followed by a deluge of rain and then a cold snap. This rapid change in weather presents a real challenge to the driver, and in the winter, more than any other time, drivers need to be well prepared to ensure that their journey goes smoothly.

Plan Ahead

Planning ahead is the key issue for trouble free winter driving. If your drivers can leave more time for their journey there is time to prepare the vehicle, drive defensively, and still get to the destination on time. Key steps for your drivers to take before the journey starts are:

- Ensure that vehicle lights are clean and working effectively.
- Keep the vehicle windscreen clear and clean and do not start driving until the windows are free from snow and ice. If there is snow on the roof, clear it off to stop it sliding down the windscreen.
- Ensure that the vehicle heating system works effectively so that the windscreen can be demisted quickly.
- Listen to weather forecasts and travel news and leave much more time for journeys to prevent rushing.
- The windscreen washer levels should be checked and topped up with washer fluid to prevent the wash water freezing. The vehicle should have an ice scraper and deicer in the glove box too.

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Driving in Snow and Ice

Drivers often do not realise that a stopping distance 10 times greater than usual is required when driving in snow and ice.

Important tips to be communicated to your drivers include:

- Starting gradually in second gear to stop the wheels spinning.
- Use a low gear to brake when driving downhill and leave more distance than usual for stopping.
- Brake smoothly, accelerate gently, and if the vehicle starts to skid, stop accelerating and point the vehicle in the desired direction.
- Think twice about overtaking, if enough time has been given for the journey, it's better to keep the speed down.
- Pay more attention to the road and be aware of icy patches in shaded areas.
- Make sure the vehicle is ventilated to stop the windscreen misting up and to stop the vehicle getting stuffy.



Driving in the Fog

We often see vehicles with their fog lights on when the visibility is greater than 100 metres. All this does is dazzle other road users.

The following guidance should be provided to drivers if fog is forecast:

- Slow down so the vehicle can be stopped within the visibility distance.
- Only use fog lights if the visibility distance is less than 100 metres.
- Use dipped headlights and do not follow the lights of the vehicle in front.
- Be aware of patchy fog and fog banks that suddenly appear after a clear section of road.
- If visibility greatly deteriorates, open the vehicle windows and listen for approaching traffic at junctions.
- Park off the road, and if that is not possible, use hazard warning lights.



Driving in Wet Weather

Driving in rain and on flooded roads presents particular problems. An important issue is aquaplaning. This occurs when the vehicle's tyres lose contact with the road surface because of the volume of rainwater. If this occurs your driver needs to slow down to ensure the tyre contacts the road again.

This issue can be prevented by slowing down in wet weather and by ensuring that tyres have an adequate tread depth. It's also best practice to leave twice the stopping distance, use dipped headlights, and brake gently.

Other issues to remember include:

- Driving at night can cause problems due to glare from lights being increased by the rainwater. Your drivers' eyesight therefore needs to be in good condition.
- Cruise control can reduce the speed a driver can react to road conditions.
- Windscreen wipers should be checked to ensure they are in good condition and ideally changed every year.
- Shoes should be dried on vehicle mats to prevent wet soles slipping off the pedals.



It appears increasingly common that sudden downpours flood roads. Here are some tips for drivers when they are faced with a flooded road:

- Before tackling a flooded road, try to watch other vehicles drive through to gauge the depth of the water. If there is any doubt, the driver should turn back and there should be no attempt to cross moving water greater than 10cm deep.
- If the decision is made to drive through the flood, the vehicle should stay in the centre of the road to avoid the camber. Progress should be slow and in a low gear as an eggcup volume of water in the vehicle engine can cause huge damage.
- Keeping the engine revs up will keep water out of the exhaust pipe.
- Test the brakes as the vehicle leaves the flooded area.

Actions for Managers

Whilst drivers need to be more prepared and allow for longer journey times, the managers of a business have some decisions to make and actions to take to ensure that their drivers get to their destination safely during the winter.

Decisions for managers

Decisions for managers to make include:

- Whether to fit winter tyres to company vehicles. The increased silica content in the tyre increases the grip in cold weather.
- Whether to provide snow socks or snow chains to drivers.
- Where to set up a contract to ensure that drivers can take their vehicle in to a service centre easily if the tyre has less than 3mm tread, or if windscreen wipers need replacing.
- How journeys can be scheduled to allow for increased time for drivers to reach their destination.
- Specify the correct type of vehicle for the type of driving required. If drivers are required to travel in more remote areas, four-wheel drive capability may be preferable.
- Whether to pay for eye tests at opticians so issues with drivers eyesight that will cause problems on dark wet nights can be identified and remedied.
- Decide how best practice driving bulletins, weather bulletins, and traffic updates can be issued to drivers in a format that will allow them to be seen and acted upon.

Our unpredictable winter weather provides a challenge to employees who drive for work. However, support from business managers in terms of guidance on action to take, as well as allowing more time to prepare for and make journeys, should ensure that driving at work activities can continue with minimal disruption. If drivers can keep their speed down and increase the space they have to stop in, they can deal with many of the challenges that winter weather creates, even the low hanging winter sun!

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