

FOUL WEATHER DRIVING



It's almost that time of the year again when Oregon goes from sunny to rainy in just a few short days. Here are some winter driving tips from the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Rain creates a variety of dangerous conditions: visibility is reduced, traction between tires and the road is reduced and your car handles with less predictability than in dry-road conditions. Take precautionary measures: start by allowing additional time to reach your destination.

- **Slow down**, especially through high water. Driving through several inches of water at high speed can cause you to lose control of the car. Driving fast through puddles could splash water into the engine and stall it. Lowering your speed helps you prepare for sudden stops caused by disabled cars, debris and other wet-weather hazards.
- **Turn on your headlights** to improve visibility.
- **Disengage your cruise control.**
- **Keep your distance.** A car needs two to three times more stopping distance on wet roads.

Vehicle maintenance during wet weather

The most common vehicle deficiencies include weak batteries, worn or damaged wiper blades, clogged air filters, low washer fluid, dirty or low motor oil and low anti-freeze levels. In low-visibility conditions, the windshield wipers and defroster help keep your view clear. Check them both to make sure they are working properly and replace the wipers if brittle or damaged.

- **Check your brakes.** After driving through a puddle, check that brakes are working properly by tapping them gently a few times.
- **Check your tires.** Make sure tires are in good condition and are at the recommended inflation level. Tires should have at least 1/32 of an inch tread depth at any two adjacent grooves, the minimum allowable by law. Driving on over-inflated or under-inflated tires is dangerous on wet pavement.

Watch out for hydroplaning conditions

Hydroplaning occurs when your front tires surf on a film of water. It can occur at speeds as low as 35 miles per hour, especially if tires are worn. If you hydroplane, ease off the gas, gently apply the brakes and steer straight ahead.

Oregon's weather can change quickly and without warning. For road conditions in Oregon, call 511 or (800) 977-ODOT (6368). Outside Oregon, dial (503) 588-2941. Reports are available 24 hours a day.

Visit www.TripCheck.com for information on road and weather conditions, incidents and traffic delays. Links to cameras on many mountain passes and major routes give real-time views of road conditions. The site also provides links to bus, train and airport information.