



Staying safe on the roads in winter

Road safety is particularly important in the winter months when driving conditions tend to be worse and the likelihood of harsher weather conditions is higher. Statistics from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) show that the number of cycling and pedestrian injuries increases during October, November and December¹ and motorists are more likely to be involved in an accident during adverse weather conditions too.

Read our factsheet for some top tips on how to ensure that your winter journeys are accident-free, in the car, on the bike and on foot.



Winter safety tips for drivers

Keeping your car in good condition

If the conditions are particularly bad, or are predicted to turn bad, it is important to make sure your vehicle is adequately prepared. RoSPA advises ticking off the items on the checklist below before embarking on a journey²:

- Make sure heaters, defrosters and windscreen wipers work – and that you have plenty of washer fluid in the tank.
- Check the tyre tread depth and pressure – in heavy snow you may want to consider snow chains.
- Double check that all your lights are working properly and aimed properly so you don't dazzle other drivers.
- Make sure you have antifreeze to combat any potential issues that may occur if the temperature experiences a noticeable drop, such as your water pump freezing.
- Create an emergency kit to ensure you are prepared should the weather change or you breakdown, including a high-visibility vest, a torch, extra clothes and a blanket.

Getting behind the wheel

If the weather is that poor, then try to avoid journeys that are not totally necessary. If you have to travel then road safety charity, Brake, recommends following these safety tips to try to help minimise your chances of being involved in an accident³:

- Reduce your driving speed to avoid skidding.
- Keep a safe distance from the car in front and take corners slowly, avoiding sudden, quick movement.
- Stick to main roads that have been gritted, wherever possible and avoid harsh braking.
- Be extra aware of cyclists and pedestrians as they may not stand out in poor or darker driving conditions.





Winter safety for cyclists

Cyclists can be particularly vulnerable during dark evenings or if the weather is poor so making sure you and your bike are prepared for cycling in the winter is really important. Road safety campaign THINK! advocates making sure⁴:

- Your tyres have plenty of grip.
- You ride smoothly around corners, being careful to avoid any debris in the road.
- Your chain is in good condition and, ideally lubricate it every week during winter months to avoid corrosion and prolong its life.
- You have suitable lights on your bike and high-visibility clothing to stand out.

If your body is cold or numb your reactions will be slower which may increase your chance of being involved in an accident. Wearing warm clothing, including gloves and a hat underneath your helmet, will help combat this.



Winter safety for pedestrians

Just like cyclists, pedestrians can be harder to spot in dark or hazardous driving conditions. RoSPA recommends following these simple safety measures to minimise the risk of being involved in an accident⁵:

- Wear bright or high-visibility clothing and avoid dark colours.
- Wear appropriate footwear to reduce the chance of slips or trips, especially in ice or snow.
- Be extra mindful of any obstacles, such as hidden ridges covered by leaves, snow or ice, especially on smaller roads that may not have been cleared.
- Avoid footpaths that have been in the shade as it will take longer for ice and snow to melt in these areas and may be treacherous.

1. <http://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/road-users/british-summertime-fact-sheet/>
2. <http://www.rospa.com/road-safety/advice/drivers/better-driving/winter-tips/>
3. <http://www.brake.org.uk/rsw/21-facts-a-resources/resources/946-weather>
4. <http://think.direct.gov.uk/cycling.html>
5. <http://www.rospa.com/resources/hubs/winter/#slipstrips>



Contact us

If you or someone you know has been involved in an accident that was not your fault, call us for free initial compensation claim advice on **0800 0 224 224** or visit **www.thompsons.law**