



Institute of Advanced Motorists

510 Chiswick High Road, London, W4 5RG
Telephone: 020 8996 9600, Fax 020 8996 9601

Fact Sheet 14/001

DRIVING IN WET WEATHER

Britain's weather causes drivers plenty of problems all year – especially severe wet or flood conditions. The IAM offers the following advice for negotiating both seasonal and “flash floods”.

- If you live in an area where flooding may occur, move your vehicle to higher ground. As well as the risk of damage to your vehicle by leaving it in a flood area, it may also be a hazard or cause obstruction to the emergency services.
- If water has entered the passenger compartments (wet carpets) and the vehicle is fitted with an airbag, do not turn the ignition on as there is a risk of airbag deployment from water in the electrical system. There may also be a risk of an electrical short circuit that can cause further damage. It is important to have the vehicle professionally examined.
- Ensure that your vehicle is well maintained, paying particular attention to the tread depth and pressure of your tyres and the condition of the windscreen wipers.
- Do not drive unless your journey is absolutely necessary. Plan your journey to avoid flooded areas and make sure you allow plenty of time. Listen to local media broadcasts.
- If wet weather is forecast take spare dry clothing, food and a hot drink. A mobile phone could be useful if you have to contact the emergency services but pull over before making the call.
- If you have to drive in a flood, take care. Do not attempt to drive through water if you are unsure of the depth. If in any doubt, wait for a vehicle with a higher wheel base to venture in – or turn around and find another route. The level of water where damage could occur to your vehicle may only be a few inches deep. Serious engine damage may occur if water is “sucked up” into the engine air intake system; catalytic converters work at high temperature and can be damaged by water. Many vehicles require **less than two feet of water before they float**.
- Try to drive in the highest section of the road if it is safe to do so. Drive only fast enough to create a small bow wave in front of the vehicle. Driving at speed can be dangerous to other vehicles or pedestrians. Do not drive in floodwater if a vehicle is travelling from the opposite direction.
- Test your brakes thoroughly after driving through water, checking there is nothing behind you first. Brakes can be dried as you move by exerting a slight pressure. Avoid harsh braking as there may be surface water to consider and you do not want to induce a skid.