

# DRIVING ADVISORY HIGH WINDS AND HEAVY RAIN



**We can't always predict when we're going to encounter high winds and heavy rain, but there are some things to do to ensure you are prepared.**

With the recent heavy rain, high winds and extensive flooding, Evan Morris, training manager at **RED Corporate Driver Training**, has highlighted the key issues facing drivers and offers some essential advice on how to stay safe during extreme weather events.

Evan said: **"The really simple message behind all of this is to slow down and plan ahead - that will help keep you out of trouble."**



## **Tread carefully**

Make sure you've always got a healthy tyre tread depth for better stopping power. A vehicle travelling at 50mph stops in:

- **25 metres with 8mm tread depth**
- **31 metres with 3mm tread depth**
- **39 metres with 1.6mm tread depth**

Tread blocks are designed to move around to help disperse water: an average car with average tyres can displace around 6 litres of water per tyre per second when travelling at 60mph. Newer tyres displace more water and reduce the risk of losing contact with the road surface (aquaplaning).

Tyres without much tread depth can't clear the volume of water, which quickly builds up under the tyre, causing it to lift clear of the road, and the driver to lose control over the vehicle.

Slower speeds give the tyre a better chance to clear the water.



## **Feel the pressure**

Ensure your tyres are the right pressure. A tyre that's rolling on a wet road creates a wedge of water in front of it.

The impact of the tread against the water in front of the contact surface creates hydrodynamic pressure, but when this pressure exceeds the pressure inside the tyres, water can no longer be repelled and the tyre lifts off the road surface. So tyres with pressure that's too low will reach this point quicker.

Over inflation will also cause less grip, as only the centre area of the tyre would be in contact with the road surface, but not the full width. Less contact patch means less water displacement.

As a tyre gets older it becomes firm and less malleable, which affects its ability to shift water. We strongly recommend tyres should be changed every five years but a maximum life span is 10 years old. You can tell the date of manufacture by a four-digit age code on the sidewall - keep a record of the date codes on all of your fleet vehicles.



## **Don't splash and dash!**

It's illegal to splash someone on the pavement, or cyclists, by driving through a puddle as it amounts to driving "without reasonable consideration for other persons".

You can be prosecuted for careless, aggressive or inconsiderate behaviour as a result, summonsed to court, fined £150 and given three penalty points.

## **Skid Training at RED**

**There is also specialist training you can undergo to learn how to counter aquaplaning - at RED we have our own skid car and skid pan on which drivers can experience the effect of aquaplaning in safe conditions and learn how to deal with it.**

[Click here to read more](#)



### Standing Water

Keep a really good eye on conditions ahead and around you, and look for clues of standing water. So, look for dark patches ahead that could signal standing water, or dips on the side of the road where it could pool.

If you see standing water ahead, try to get your braking done in a smooth, long fashion before you get to it. A reduction in speed will significantly reduce the risk of aquaplaning.

Try to make steering inputs smooth and gradual, minimising the work the tyres are having to do to both change direction and clear water.

Before you hit standing water, get your wipers on if you can. You can be blinded for a few seconds by a sheet of water otherwise. Once through the water, lightly press the brakes to clear them of excess water.



### Don't get out of your depth

If you encounter deep water, enter it slowly to push the water forwards at the same speed.

It is important to keep moving to avoid stalling in water. Slip the clutch and keep revs high so the exhaust blows water out, but be careful the engine doesn't ingest water at high revs.

If you're unsure how deep it is, recce on foot and test the depth (after all, shoes are cheaper to replace than your vehicle being written off). Even shallow water can cause issues – in fact a car can float away in just 30 cm of water.

With very deep water you should consider less revs to avoid water being ingested and causing damage, but ensure you keep the engine running. At fast flowing fords or floods do not enter if past the door sill height. The force of the water may push the vehicle downstream. Assess first, even by entering the water with the vehicle slowly but consider you may need to reverse back out.



### If the worst should happen...

If your vehicle becomes submerged, open all the windows quickly before the electrical components fail. The rear of the car is more likely to float due to the heavy engine at the front, so rear exit may be your best option.

It's also worth having a centre punch or 'break glass' hammer in the vehicle if you live in areas more susceptible to flooding. Failing that, instruct your drivers that the head restraint and even the metal hook end of a seatbelt can be used to break the vehicle's glass in the corners of the side windows.

## TIPS FOR DRIVING IN HIGH WINDS



- Try and keep an idea in your mind about the wind direction, so you can predict where gusts might come from.
- Look for signs that you may catch a gust, such as gaps in fences or bushes ahead..
- Watch out for debris in the road and flying objects, and try wherever possible to avoid heavily tree lined areas.
- Be aware of high sided vehicles being blown around, and avoid sitting directly alongside large vehicles at all cost. If passing them, even on multi-lane roads, take some time beforehand to pick when they look most stable, and also where you can give yourself as much space to pass, before making your move as efficiently and safely as possible.

### Try our specialist training courses

"We provide a wide range of specialist courses aimed at keeping drivers and vehicles safe. With extreme weather conditions happening more often, it's worth investing time in ensuring your fleet is as safe as it can be – drivers who are educated and prepared are far less likely to have an accident or get themselves into trouble – and that more than pays for the cost of training."

**Evan Morris**  
Training Manager at RED  
Corporate Driver Training



For more information visit:  
**[www.redtraining.com](http://www.redtraining.com)**  
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