



September 11, 2008

## Driving in Rain

Driving in rain takes extra precautionary measures. Allow for more travel time; keep in mind the traffic and the fact that you should be driving slower, or that your preplanned route may be changed due to flooding.

### Before you get on the road:

- Stay on top of your car's condition; its brakes, tire pressure and tread depth, wipers and defroster should be checked regularly so that you don't have to deal with it during a deluge.
- Safety features such as stability control, traction control and all-wheel drive are increasingly popular standard or optional features in vehicles. Tires designed specifically for wet roads aid drivers during the storm seasons.
- Make sure that your wipers are in good condition and functioning properly. If they're brittle or damaged, replace them before you're caught in a downpour.
- Every car should have an emergency kit. Some of the basic items include:
  - 12-foot jumper cables
  - Two quarts of oil
  - Blanket
  - Flashlight and extra batteries
  - Tire pressure gauge
  - Roll of duct tape
  - Ice scraper
  - Help sign
  - Bottled water
  - First aid kit (including an assortment of bandages, gauze, adhesive tape, antiseptic cream, instant ice and heat compresses, scissors and aspirin)
  - Tool kit to include: Flat head & Phillips head screwdrivers, Pliers & Vise Grips, Adjustable wrench
  - Heavy-duty nylon bag to carry it all in.
  - Four 15-minute roadside flares
  - Gallon of antifreeze
  - Extra fuses
  - Tire inflator (such as a Fix-A-Flat)
  - Rags
  - Pocketknife
  - Pen and paper
  - Granola or energy bars



Granted, all these items practically necessitate a large SUV to haul them down the road, but a basic version with two roadside flares, a quart of oil, small first aid kit, extra fuses, flashlight, Leatherman Tool (or any other multipurpose tool commonly containing pliers, wire cutters, knife, saw, bottle opener, screwdrivers, files and an awl), tire inflator, rags, pocket knife, pen and paper and a help sign will take up a minimal amount of trunk space.

## Now you're ready to hit the road.

- The biggest issue to take into consideration is that a wet road is more slippery than a dry road. Your tires lose traction and adherence to the road because there's a film of liquid between them and the asphalt. Thus, you should leave extra space between you and the car in front of you. Brake earlier and with less force than you would normally. Not only does this increase the stopping distance between you and the car in front of you, it also lets the driver behind you know that you're slowing down. Also, be more meticulous about using turn signals, so that other drivers know your intentions, and take turns and curves with less speed than you would in dry conditions.
- Most of America's roads are crowned in the middle, which means that the water will run off to the sides. If possible, stay on the middle of the road to avoid deep standing puddles.
- If you see a large pool of brackish water ahead of you, if at all possible, drive around it or choose a different route. It could be that it's covering a huge gaping maw. Water splashing up into your engine compartment can damage your internal electrical systems. Also, a pothole may be hiding under the water, just waiting in ambush to damage a wheel. If you can't gauge the depth, or if it's covering up the side curb, try to avoid it.
- Don't attempt to cross running water; this you'll probably get into a lot of trouble if the force of the water is greater than the weight of your vehicle.
- After you cross a puddle, tap on your brake pedal lightly to dry off some of the water on your rotors.
- Virginia Law requires you to turn on your headlights every time you turn on your windshield wipers. It helps you see the road, and more importantly, it helps other motorists see you. However, don't blast your high beams in the rain or fog -- it'll obscure your view further, as the beam will reflect back at you on the water droplets in the air.
- Watch out for pedestrians. Fiddling with an umbrella or a rain slicker means that a usually observant pedestrian is otherwise distracted. Plus, raindrops deaden sound, so the usual audio clues for measuring car distances become obscured. Keep a sharp lookout for people in the road.
- If it's raining so hard that you can't see the road or the car in front of you, pull over and wait it out. When pulling off the road in heavy rain make sure you have Hazard Warning Lights on.

Taking a few precautions and being extra careful will hopefully keep you from being the poor, sopping wet stranded person on the shoulder of the freeway waiting for a tow truck. Or more importantly, it could very well save your life.



For additional information contact: Your Unit Additional Duty Safety Officer, or Your Unit Collateral Duty Safety Officer, or Installation Safety Office - 878-3740