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## How to Drive Safely on Wet Roads

Each year, there are thousands of car accidents (some of them fatal) due to wet roads and poor driving conditions in the rain. Don't become a statistic. Here are some practical tips to help you know how to recognize dangerous conditions and drive safely when the road gets wet.

### Why is Driving in the Rain So Risky?

As the road gets wet, oil and grime that have settled into the pavement rise to the surface. The road gets extremely slick and slippery, making it more difficult to get traction.

### Slow Down

Your best thing you can do to prevent an accident on a slick road is to slow down. When you drive slowly, a greater amount of the tire's tread makes contact with the road, giving you better traction. Try to drive at a steady pace, and avoid jerky movements when braking, accelerating, or turning.

### Keep a Safe Distance from the Car in Front of You

It takes up to three times longer to stop on a wet road than a dry one, even if your tires are designed for wet weather and are of good quality. Remember:

- Don't trail closely behind other vehicles; three car-lengths is a safe distance to be behind a vehicle that's in front of you
- Be alert for brake lights ahead of you
- Always turn on your headlights so that other cars can see you
- Drive without the cruise control; it will help you to be more aware

### What to Do if You Lose Control of Your Car

If your car starts to skid, try this:

- Don't slam on the brakes
- Apply the brakes in a firm but steady manner
- Steer in the direction of the skid
- If your car has anti-lock brakes, apply more pressure to the brakes but do not pump them

If there is water on the road, you may be in danger of losing control of your car due to hydroplaning. Hydroplaning occurs when your tires glide across the surface of the water on the road. If you start to hydroplane:



- Take your foot off the gas, but don't slam on the brakes
- If you have a manual transmission, push down on the clutch and let the car slow down on its own
- If you have automatic transmission, hold the steering wheel steady and lightly apply the brakes

### Don't Drive if You're Tired or Distracted



Driving in wet weather requires extreme alertness, particularly at night. If you're tired, find a safe place to pull over and take a rest. Avoid distractions such as eating, drinking, talking on the phone, fiddling with the radio, or handing items to children in the back seat -- anything where you need to take one or both hands off the wheel.

### Get Your Tires Checked

Driving with bad (or bald) tires can only make things worse. Try

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this:

- Check your tires regularly for tread wear; the treads should be at least 1/16 in depth to perform safely in the rain
- Have the air pressure checked at least once a month
- Have the mechanic rotate the tires as part of your routine maintenance to ensure even wear

If you live in an area with a lot of wet weather, consider investing in a tire that's specially designed for slicker road conditions.

-- *Beth Adamo*

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- [AAA -- Driving on Wet Roads](#) 