

Troopers Offer Safety Tips For Navigating Rain Storms and Flooded Roadways



As a result of today's scattered severe thunderstorms and localized flooding, the Delaware State Police would like to offer the following safety tips for operating a motor vehicle in a rain storm or on water covered roadways.

Drive a clean car in good condition

When visibility is limited by wet weather, it's important that your car itself doesn't impede your sight. Once a month, clean the outsides and insides of windshields and windows, and check your windshield wiper blades for wear. Check the level of your washer fluid once a week.

Routinely perform a quick check of headlights, taillights, turn signals and tire treads before driving the car for the first time each day.

Know the roads

Take a moment to consider your route. If it takes you through low-lying bridge underpasses or past ditches prone to flooding choose an alternate route of travel.

Utilize headlights but not high beams

Though many newer cars come with automatic running lights, turn on the actual headlights when using your windshield wipers so your taillights come on as well. The idea behind having headlights is so the other drivers can see you. When you turn your headlights on and your tail lights come on, you identify all four corners of the vehicle.

You don't, however, need to flip on your high beams; the brighter light will just reflect off wet surfaces, bouncing back into your eyes and irritating other drivers.

Slow down!

Leave at least five seconds of following distance between your own car and the one in front, and don't feel pressure to drive the posted speed limit. The speed listed on the side of the highway is the maximum speed for perfect weather and perfect road conditions, so if the road is wet, it could be too fast for existing conditions.

And remember: never use cruise control on wet roads. If you hydroplane under cruise control, the automatic acceleration can cause you to lose control of your vehicle when your tires regain traction.

Steer where you want to go

If you're going too fast and end up hydroplaning turn the wheel in the direction you want to go—and don't be afraid if you don't steer out of the skid on the first try. It may take three to five adjustments to get back on course.

Hold off on unnecessary trips

It's one thing if you need to get home to your children or you're already on the road, but otherwise, ask yourself if it is imperative to drive right now. Just as you would stay off the roads in heavy snow, it's OK to stay home in heavy rain.

Flood Safety Tips

Floods can occur anywhere, with floodwaters rising gradually or flash floods striking suddenly. Most flood fatalities happen because people try to drive through deadly waters rather than avoid them. Water's powerful force can easily overtake vehicles caught in a flood. Follow these tips to stay safe in your car during a flood.

Pay attention to barricades.

Don't ignore them by driving past them.

Do not drive through standing water on roads or in parking lots.

The average automobile can be swept off the road in 12 inches of moving water, and roads covered by water are prone to collapse. Attempting to drive through water also may stall your engine, with the potential to cause irreparable damage if you try to restart the engine. If you come upon a flooded street, take an alternate route.

Take extra precautions if you're forced to drive through water.

If no alternate route exists and you have no other reasonable alternative but to drive through standing water.

- Do your best to estimate the depth of the water (if other cars are driving through, take note of how deep the water is).
- Drive slowly and steadily through the water.

- Avoid driving in water that downed electrical or power lines have fallen in – electric current passes through water easily.
- Watch for items traveling downstream – they can trap or crush you if you're in their path.
- If you have driven through water up to the wheel rims or higher, test your brakes on a clear patch of road at low speed. If they are wet and not stopping the vehicle as they should, dry them by pressing gently on the brake pedal with your left foot while maintaining speed with your right foot.
- Stay off the telephone unless you must report severe injuries.
- If your vehicle stalls in the deep water, you may need to restart the engine to make it to safety. Keep in mind that restarting may cause irreparable damage to the engine.
- If you can't restart your vehicle and you become trapped in rising water, immediately abandon it for higher ground. Try to open the door or roll down the window to get out of the vehicle. If you are unable to get out safely, call 911 or get the attention of a passerby or someone standing on higher ground so that they may call for help.

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