

Wet Weather Driving

Heavy rain and flash flooding create hazardous driving conditions, thereby increasing the likelihood of an accident.

To help improve safety and reduce the likelihood of a crash, motorists should take the following precautions:

- Allow more travel time and keep vehicle tires and brakes in good working condition. Buckle your own seat belt and secure children in child safety seats or booster seats in the back of the vehicle.
- Reduce your speed and drive defensively. Motorists should drive at least five to 10 miles per hour slower on wet pavement and allow at least twice the normal following distance between cars to provide ample room for stopping. Keep a distance between your car and the one in front of you. Be ready for a sudden stop. Remember that the driver behind you cannot see well either. Signal for turns ahead of time and brake early as you near a stop. Be patient and do not pass lines of traffic.
- Stay in the car and wait for the heavy rain to let up. Roads are the slickest once rain has begun to fall, especially if it has not rained for a while. For the first 10 to 15 minutes, the rain combines with dirt, dust, oil, grease and rubber to create a slippery surface. If the rain is extremely heavy, stop and pull over with your emergency flashers on, away from any trees or other tall objects. If motorists must exit the vehicle, they should do so on the passenger side of the car.
- Turn on your low beam headlights and use the defroster to increase visibility whether it is day or night. North Carolina law states that motorists must use their headlights at all times while using windshield wipers regardless of the time of day. High beams, or “brights,” could reflect off the fog and decrease visibility.
- If possible, stay in the middle lane. Most American roads are higher in the middle, so there is a greater chance of water runoff and standing water in the side lanes.
- After driving through a puddle, tap your brake pedal to help dry your brake rotors. Try to avoid pools of standing water; they could be hiding holes in the pavement. Do not try to cross running water.
- It is best to take shelter and wait out the storm at a rest stop or other public place. If you take shelter under an overpass or bridge, park on the shoulder and be careful not to block traffic. The weather could reduce visibility, and other drivers may have difficulty seeing your vehicle.
- Do not drive through flooded areas. If you see a flooded roadway ahead, turn around and take an alternate route to your destination. If there is no alternate route, head to higher

ground and wait for the water to subside. Do not attempt to cross over a flooded road even if it seems shallow. Just one foot of water can float many vehicles, while two feet of rushing water can carry away vehicles including SUVs and pick-ups;

- Do not drive if you are tired or distracted. Driving in wet weather requires you to be alert, particularly at night. If you are tired, pull off the road to a safe place and take a break, or better yet, postpone your trip. You should also avoid eating, drinking, talking on the phone, adjusting the radio, or handing items to children in the back seat – anything requiring you to take one or both hands off the steering wheel momentarily.
- Know what to do if your car begins to hydroplane. Hydroplaning occurs when your tires glide across the surface of the water on the road. If your car starts to hydroplane, take your foot off the gas, but do not stomp on the brakes. Instead, apply the brakes in a steady, slightly firm manner, and steer in the direction of the skid. If you have a manual transmission (i.e. stick shift), push in the clutch and let the car slow down on its own. If you have an automatic transmission, hold the steering wheel steady and lightly apply the brakes. For cars that have antilock brakes, you should apply more pressure (steady) to the brakes, but avoid pumping them.
- Put together a supply kit for your trunk. Include a flashlight, first aid kit with an instructional manual, blanket, booster cables, shovel, sand to give tires needed traction, snacks and drinking water, and safety flares or an orange or red cloth to tie to the antenna.