**Winter Driving**

When wet weather arrives, stopping distances can be at least double those required for stopping on dry roads. Where possible, the best way to stay safe in severe weather conditions is to avoid driving altogether.

Even if you know the roads well, it always pays to expect the unexpected. Driving in wet conditions can be hazardous and even drivers with local knowledge can be caught out during heavy downpours.

**Driving in heavy rain**

Check your brakes, tyres, lights, batteries, windscreens and wipers are in good condition and well maintained. It is particularly important to ensure the pressure and tread on your tyres are OK before setting off.

Check the forecasts before travelling and where possible consider taking alternative routes to avoid bad weather.

Listen to the radio for the latest news about accidents or hazards that may interfere with your journey.

In bad weather it will take longer to react to hazards, therefore it is important to reduce your speed if the road is wet.

Maintain a safe distance between your vehicle and the one in front. This will allow you to react if you need to brake suddenly.

Be mindful that someone could step out in front of you at any time and drive accordingly. Pedestrians, cyclists and motorbikes are harder to spot in the wet.

Adjust your wiper speed and make sure your wiper blades are kept clean and free from defects.

Ensure there is proper de-icer fluid in the screen wash bottle and make sure the bottle is full.

If you break down don’t be tempted to prop the bonnet open while waiting for assistance. The engine will be more difficult to start if the electrics are soaked.

**Driving in snow**

Check the weather forecasts and road conditions for your destination before travelling

Make sure all your car lights are working and you have no failed bulbs. Ensure that dirt, salt and snow is cleared away from light fixtures.

Always ensure all windows are fully cleared of snow, frost and condensation before setting off on a journey - it is illegal to drive with obscured vision.

Also clear snow from the top of the car as this can fall down and obscure your windscreen while you are driving.

Keep windscreen washer fluid topped up as windscreens quickly become dirty from traffic spray and salt from the roads.

Make sure you have sufficient fuel for your journey. Keep the fuel tank topped up.

Give yourself extra time for your journey and drive at a constant speed. Accept your journey will take longer and don't take risks.

Carry warm waterproof clothing, food, water and a torch in your vehicle in case weather conditions mean you have to stop

Take a mobile telephone with you and make sure it is fully charged. Carry a mobile charger in the car.

Be mindful that even if it has stopped snowing, low temperatures could cause snow to turn to ice resulting in hazardous road conditions.

If you get stuck in the snow stay with your car. In an emergency, if you do need to leave it, park it out of a main traffic route, where it won't cause an obstruction when conditions ease.

**Driving in fog**

When driving in fog use dipped headlights so other drivers can see you. Fog lights can be used when visibility is seriously reduced to less than 100 metres but they must be switched off if visibility improves.

Maintain a safe distance behind the vehicle in front, and be aware of other drivers who don't use headlights, as they will be harder to see.

Familiarise yourself with your front and rear fog lights – know how to switch them on and off

Avoid tailing the rear lights of the vehicle in front. Getting too close can give you a false sense of security.

Try to avoid speeding up too quickly, even if the fog seems to be clearing. You could find yourself in the middle of dense fog.

**Deep water and floods**

Many cars will start to float in as little as 12 inches of water. This can be extremely dangerous; as the wheels lose grip, and you will lose control - with the obvious risks and consequences.

The engine air intake on many cars is low down at the front of the car; just an egg cupful of water ingested into the combustion chamber is sufficient to destroy an engine. Water does not compress, resulting in bent or broken con rods or split engine block. Driving too fast, even in relatively shallow water can cause water to be ingested.

Even appropriate fording can cause costly damage. The catalytic converter, (part of the exhaust system) which works at extremely high temperatures, can crack upon contact with cold water, requiring costly replacement.

**Avoiding costly damage**

Only drive through flood water if you know it's not too deep. This will be no deeper than the lowest part of the vehicle's bodywork, (usually the bottom of the spoiler (front panel) or sill panel, (below the doors).

Do not attempt to drive through fast-moving water, such as at a flooded bridge approach - your car could easily be swept away, even at modest depths.

With standing water, physically test the depth of the water with a pole (wade in, if necessary, but only where it is safe to do so), or observe the depth against other vehicles that cross successfully. (Just because they are successful does not mean it is appropriate to follow, see above). If in doubt....don't!

If you have to drive through water, select a low gear so the engine revs are higher, slipping the clutch if necessary or, for automatic vehicle, select the lowest ratio and balance the throttle and brakes.

Before entering, consider other drivers - pass through flooded sections one car at a time, don't drive through water against approaching fording vehicles and test your brakes as soon as you leave the water.

**If you get stuck**

If the worst happens and you break down: firstly, ensure the safety of all involved, including other road users. Do not repeatedly try to start the engine, (this may cause further damage). Call for recovery and wait in a safe place.