

Dawsongroup | vans

WINTER DRIVERS GUIDE



As the temperature drops, the weather gets worse and the evenings get darker, the **dangers and risks** associated with driving increase. **Fog, snow,** and **icy roads** can impede visibility and cause drivers to lose control of their vehicles.

When planning your winter journeys, it is **imperative that you take extra care** and be **alert to changing weather conditions**.

At **Dawsongroup vans**, we have created some helpful tips for winter driving to help you reach your destination safely.





The Driver

Many drivers find themselves regularly driving in the dark during the winter months. Dark evenings combined with bright headlights can have a serious impact on visibility. To maximise visibility, it is advised that you take a moment when you first enter the vehicle to let your eyes adjust before beginning to drive.



Driving in the rain

The stopping distance when driving in the rain is over double what it is in the dry. Additionally, the risk of losing control is much higher, particularly with water collecting on the roads. It is logical for drivers to slow down in this type of weather, so make sure that you've set aside extra time for each journey.

If you start to feel your vehicle lose control or 'aquaplane' on surface water, do not accelerate or brake suddenly. Instead, you should gradually remove your foot from the accelerator and avoid making any sudden movements with the steering wheel. This will help you to regain control, even during heavy rain.



Driving in the fog

If your visibility is less than a hundred metres, then you're driving in 'very low visibility' conditions. To keep yourself and other drivers safe, you must switch your dipped headlights and fog lights on. This will offer you a better view of the road and ensure that other drivers can see you. However, it is important to remember to turn these lights off once the fog starts to clear because they can dazzle other drivers.

We would advise caution when driving through fog as it is often patchy and can appear quickly. Do not start to speed up when the fog starts to clear as you can quickly find yourself back in the fog, which can pose a risk to both you and other drivers.

Even during the day, you need to remain extra vigilant of people and obstacles as the low winter sun can be blinding, making it difficult to take in everything on the road. Although most people wear reflective clothing, drivers still need to be extra careful when driving, especially in rural areas.

We would recommend having a pair of sunglasses or a hat in your vehicle and to remain vigilant, even when the sun is behind you. Oncoming traffic may be affected by the low sun and it's important to pay attention to any hazards that might occur.



Driving in the wind

High-sided vehicles are the most likely to be affected by strong winds and it is important to be aware of this when driving next to them, as large gusts can result in hazards. However, any vehicle, cyclist or motorcyclist can be a risk, especially in open areas. Take windy conditions into account, particularly if your journey includes crossing bridges or climbing hills, and always remain vigilant of other drivers on the road.



Driving in the ice and snow

Although there is no law prohibiting driving with snow on your roof, you can be penalised for 'driving without due consideration' if it falls off onto your windscreen and leads to an accident. Take the time to remove the snow from your roof before you set off and remember to drive carefully as snow is often an indicator that there will also be ice on the road.

Light steering and quiet tyres are both signs you are driving on ice. Ice can be incredibly hazardous, especially as it is often difficult to spot while driving. If your vehicle starts to skid on ice patches, depress the clutch and turn the steering into the skid until the car is straight. It is important you do not brake as it will cause the tyres to lock, and you will skid further.

If you are operating an electric vehicle (EV), icy conditions may require a change in driver behaviour. The slippery conditions mean the regenerative braking technology is likely to be less effective, meaning the driver will need to think about the impact this could have on their braking and stopping distances.



The Van

Before you start any journey, you should fully prepare your vehicle and inspect the following features:



Tyres

Your tyres should be the first thing you check when planning a winter drive. The legal tyre tread depth must be a minimum of 1.6mm, however, research has shown that worn tyres take sixty percent longer to stop than brand new ones. Under-inflated tyres can also have an impact on stopping distances, so be sure to check your tyre pressure weekly.



Electrical Systems

Take some time to make sure that all your lights are in good working order. A broken light will impact your visibility and make it harder for other road users to see you. It is also important ensure that your battery is not flat, and that the ignition is working as well.



Brakes

When travelling in wet conditions, stopping distances are at least double those of dry roads. In icy conditions, this number rises to least ten times. It is imperative that your brakes are fully functioning when driving in these wintery conditions. Double check your brakes regularly this winter and book your vehicle in to see a mechanic if you have any concerns.



Visibility

Poor weather and the low sun can impact your visibility. To mitigate this, ensure that your wiper blades are in good condition and not leaving streaks. Whilst checking your windscreen, also make sure that your windscreen washer bottle is kept full, with the correct concentration of cleaner fluid. Before setting off on a journey, wait for the windows and mirrors to complete demisted, offering you the best view of the road ahead. Lights can also get filthy from the spray, keeping them clean is vital especially with the shorter days and poor visibility.

Your Journey

During bad weather you should inform others of your journey, letting them know where you are going, the route you are taking and your estimated time of arrival.

It is also important to considering that journey times are likely to be increased due to wintery conditions, so factor this additional time into your journey planning. If you are driving an EV, you should allow time prior to leaving to preheat your battery and cabin whilst the vehicle is still being charged, to ensure your battery starts the journey at optimal temperature and you minimise the use of heaters during your trip. As the EV range achieved is reduced when driving in colder temperatures, it is important that you drive smoothly and sensibly to get the best performance out of your battery.

Try to rearrange any trips during poor weather and allow extra time for your journey if you cannot. Keep up to date with travel reports and weather forecasts to limit the chances of driving in hazardous conditions.

You should prepare for the possibility that extreme weather could lead to an emergency stop or being stuck in your vehicle. Make sure you pack plenty of food and water, as well as necessities like warm clothing and phone chargers.

The darker evenings can also lead to you feeling more tired than in the summer months. One in six crashes resulting in death or injury on major roads are fatigue-related, so making sure you are well rested before beginning the journey and take regular stops.

Driving in the winter provides you as a driver with multiple challenges that you will need to consider. Just remember that by failing to plan, you are planning to fail!



Contact us:

0844 381 9000

contactus@dawsongroup.co.uk