

CALTRAN'S RAINY DRIVING TIPS

Since winter in California frequently means rain, Caltrans issued the following tips for safe driving during rainy weather.

The agency reminds drivers that in stormy conditions, it is more difficult to see other vehicles, road signs and the road itself. It is critical to make sure you can see and be seen.

- First and foremost: slow down! It takes longer to stop or adjust in wet weather.
- Stay toward the middle lanes – water tends to pool in the outside lanes.
- Don't follow large trucks or buses too closely. They spray created by their large tires reduces your vision. Take care when passing them as well; if you must pass, do so quickly and safely.
- Be more alert when driving in wet or slippery conditions. Watch out for brake lights in front of you.
- Turn your headlights on even in a light rain, or in gloomy, foggy or overcast conditions. Before it starts to rain, replace old or brittle wipers.
- Never drive beyond the limits of visibility. At night rainy roads become especially treacherous. The glare of oncoming lights, amplified by the rain on your widescreens, can cause temporary loss of visibility while substantially increasing driver fatigue. In rainy conditions pedestrians, livestock and wildlife are extremely hard to spot and even harder to avoid.
- Never drive through moving water if you can't see the ground through it; your vehicle could be swept off the road.
- When driving through a puddle of uncertain depth, go slow. If its deeper than the bottom of your doors, turn around and find another route.
- If possible, stay off the road during heavy thunderstorms. Large flashes of lightning can temporarily blind and disorient drivers, and the accompanying high winds and heavy rain can create deadly driving conditions.

Before you go - When you begin a journey in rain, your shoes will be wet and liable to slip off the pedals. Scuff the soles on the rubber matting or carpeting of the vehicle before you start the engine. All motorists should regularly check that their headlights, tail lights, brake lights and turn signals are working properly.

How are your tires? – Check your tires on a regular basis. Bald tires significantly reduce your traction on wet roadways, and offer little resistance to hydroplaning.

Turn on your wipers – Replace your wipers regularly, at least once a year. Wiper blades in bad condition don't clear water from the windshield very well and distort your view.

Turn on your lights – Whenever visibility is poor or it rains, headlights are a good way to let other drivers know where you are. It's both helpful to other travelers and makes you safer.

Heavy rain – When visibility is so limited that the edges of the road or other vehicles cannot be seen at a safe distance, it is time to pull over and wait for the rain to ease up. It is best to stop at rest

areas or other protected areas. If the road is your only option, pull off as far as possible, preferably past the end of a guard rail, and wait until the storm passes, seldom more than a few minutes. Keep your headlights on and turn on emergency flashers to alert other drivers.

Foggy windows – Rain or high humidity can quickly cause windows to mist up inside the vehicle. In a vehicle equipped with air conditioning, turn up the heat and direct the airflow to your defrosters with the AC switch engaged.

Handling a skid – Brake before entering the curves. Steer and brake with a light touch. If you find yourself in a skid, remain calm and ease your foot off the gas, and carefully steer in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go.

Oily deposits – Watch for intersections because of the oil spots in the road. Rain is most dangerous when it falls after a long, dry spell on to roads that have become polished and smooth: the rain blends with oil and rubber-dust deposits on the road surface to form a highly dangerous skid mixture.

Driving through water – Where water has flooded onto the road, drive very slowly and cautiously.

Never drive through moving water if you can't see the ground through it: you and your vehicle could be swept off the road. Stop the vehicle before entering the flooded area and check the water level ahead. Generally, if the water is deeper than the bottom of your doors or the bottom third of your wheels, it is inadvisable to attempt driving through it.