

## Safe Driving in Rain

**D**riving on a wet road presents special challenges, especially when the road is covered with oils, mud, fallen leaves or other accumulated debris that become very slick with the first rainfall after a dry spell. All drivers, including CMV drivers, must be on guard when driving in rainy conditions.

### PRE-TRIP PREPARATION

Drivers should always have a plan to be prepared for adverse weather conditions. Since rain reduces visibility, most pre-trip inspections already include checking headlights, tail lights, brake lights, and turn signals to ensure the vehicle can be seen by other vehicles. It's also important to check a vehicle's tire tread condition and inflation level to provide better control on wet roads.

Visibility in any weather condition can be made worse if a vehicle has a dirty windshield covered with smears from bug impacts or road grime and oils. Taking time to thoroughly clean the windshield (inside and out) can help maintain the best visibility possible.

Normal maintenance should extend to replacing windshield wipers on a periodic basis. Waiting until you can't see through the wash of water on your windshield is usually too late.

### MULTIPLE ISSUES WITH DRIVING IN RAIN

Rain creates several potential problems for drivers:

- » reduced traction
- » longer braking distances
- » generally less control of steering, and in some cases "hydroplaning"
- » reduced visibility creating a veil between vehicles

Generally, the first rainfall after a dry spell creates the most difficulty for drivers. During dry periods, the sun heats the asphalt and brings up the surface oils. Additionally, dripping oil and grease from passing vehicles slowly accumulates (especially at intersections where traffic stops for signals). These oils become very slick with the introduction of rain. It is this combination of oils and water that can make it tough to stop or control your vehicle.

When heavier rains gradually wash the surface of the road, traction at lower speeds can be regained. At higher speeds, your tires can actually ride up on top of the water on the road surface. This is called "hydroplaning" and occurs when the tires are no longer capable of pushing away the water that accumulates in front of and under them. Tires with adequate tread depth help to minimize this occurrence while tires that have very shallow treads will tend to hydroplane more easily.

Falling rain reduces visibility, contrast and light levels. The rain itself makes it harder to spot other cars, pedestrians and

changes in road conditions. During heavy rain, like fog, the use of low beam headlights can help, but high beams may produce glare. If your vehicle has "Daytime Running Lights", these are not an adequate substitute for turning on your low beam lights (normal setting). Some states require the use of lights whenever it is raining.

### BASIC TIPS

There are many things to watch out for when driving in rain:

- » **Allow for additional travel time so you can drive slower than normal.** This will give you the freedom to allow greater following distances, cope with heavy traffic that is moving more slowly than normal, and enable you to navigate any unexpected detours.
- » **Turn on your headlights (low beams).** This helps other vehicles spot you sooner and helps you to see what's ahead.
- » **Watch out for pedestrians.** Under difficult weather conditions, pedestrians may be distracted by fiddling with an umbrella or other rain gear. Additionally, falling rain tends to deaden sound so pedestrians may not hear a vehicle approaching.
- » **Brake earlier and with less force.** This can increase the stopping distance between you and the vehicle in front of you, while warning the driver behind you that you're slowing down. Also use turn signals earlier so that other drivers know your intentions. In general, it may help to take turns and curves with less speed than you would in dry conditions.
- » If you start to **hydroplane, don't brake suddenly or turn the wheel**, you might spin into a skid. Release the gas pedal slowly and steer straight until the vehicle regains traction.
- » **Never drive through deep puddles or flooded roads**, particularly if you can't see the pavement through the water! According to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, 50% of flood fatalities are caused by people attempting to drive through water. The depth of water on roadways is not always obvious and it can hide dangerous debris and potholes, or the roadbed could be washed out. Rising water could stall the vehicle's engine, trap the vehicle and sweep it away.
- » Roads that go through higher elevations can become especially dangerous as the weather may be different on top of a ridge than in the valley below. When traveling in mountain areas, be sure to get a **complete weather forecast for all elevation ranges.**
- » **Take it slow!**



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*The Shield*  
Safe Driving in Rain  
Quiz



Driver Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print

Driver Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please circle one correct answer for each question.

1. Normal maintenance should extend to replacing windshield wipers how often?
  - a. Once per week
  - b. After each trip
  - c. When they are worn out
  - d. none of the above
2. A combination of \_\_\_\_\_ on the road can make it difficult to control your vehicle.
  - a. water and dirt
  - b. oils and water
  - c. both of the above
  - d. neither of the above
3. Tires with adequate tread depth help to minimize \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. visibility
  - b. rain damage
  - c. hydroplaning
  - d. none of the above
4. If you start to hydroplane, brake or turn the wheel to prevent spinning into a skid.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. What should a driver get before traveling in mountain areas?
  - a. The weather forecast
  - b. A truck wash
  - c. An oil change
  - d. All of the above

