

# Rain Rain Go Away

**STAY ALERT** during severe weather. Think ahead and plan with safety in mind. It may save your life and those that may have to come and rescue you.

## Know how to handle hydroplaning

Hydroplaning occurs when water in front of your tires builds up faster than your car's weight can push it out of the way. The water pressure causes your car to rise up and slide on a thin layer of water between your tires and the road. If you feel your car is starting to hydroplane or glide on the film of the water on the road, do not be quick to turn your steering wheel and do not slam on the brakes. Instead, take your foot off the gas slowly and steer straight until you feel the car regained its traction. If your car has an automatic transmission, slow down by lightly tapping the brakes. If your car has a manual transmission, step on the clutch and let the car slow down on its own.

## Help other drivers see you

Be sure your headlights, tail lights, brake lights, and turn signals are working. Even though you do not need them to see the road, headlights will make your car more noticeable to other drivers.

## Practice safe driving habits

Driving in the rain can be distracting, even to an experienced driver. When you first get into your car, wipe your shoes on your car mat to make sure they do not slip on the pedals. Use your headlights, windshield wipers, and defogger to increase your ability to see. Drivers who are tired or distracted by eating, drinking, or talking should also pull over and wait for the rain to subside rather than attempt to drive with so many potentially hazardous factors.

Rain is responsible for thousands of vehicle accidents yearly. According to the California Highway Patrol, auto accidents increase by over 203% when it rains because people do not change their driving habits on wet roads. It is dangerous not to take into account the affect weather can have on your commute.

When the road is wet, the film of the water on asphalt causes tires to lose traction. Less obvious is the fact that rain reduces driving perception. It is harder to see through rain, and it also decreases visibility through its action on headlights, windshields, and the road itself. While most people slow down when it rains, there are other precautions that will help keep you, and those who share the road with you, from safe.

## Prepare your car for rainy weather

Check your windshield wipers to see if they need replacing and check your tires to be sure they are in good condition. Worn-out wiper blades will compromise your view through the windshield and balding tires will greatly reduce your traction. If the tread depth on your tires is less than 1/16 of an inch, it is time for new tires. A tire center or your mechanic can check your tread depth and make sure your tires are properly inflated and balanced.

## Defog your windows

Rainy weather will quickly cause your windshield to fog. Turn on both front and rear defrosters and make sure the air conditioning (A/C) is on. Most cars' climate control systems will automatically engage the A/C when the windshield's defrost function is selected.

## Keep a safe distance

Never tailgate during a rainstorm. It is not a good driving habit in any weather, but it is particularly risky when roads are wet since it takes up to three times the distance to stop your car. Be alert for brake lights and turn signals on the cars ahead of you. Make sure you use your own signals too so that other drivers can see you and react in time. Stay back from trucks and buses since the road spray created by their tires can reduce visibility.

## Know how to handle a skid

No matter how carefully you drive, an occasional skid is inevitable. Do not follow your instinct and slam on the brakes. That could lock your wheels and make the skid worse. Instead, regain control by steering in the direction of the skid while tapping your brakes to gradually reduce your speed. If your car has antilock brakes (ABS), apply steady even pressure to the brakes and avoid pumping them.

## Beware of deep or running water

If you can not tell how deep a puddle is, choose a different route or drive around it. There could be a deep pothole underneath that can damage your car or enough water could splash up and damage your engine. Flowing water can push your car into another car, a tree or other objects, or into deeper water. Turn back rather than test your car's limits.

## Slow down!

Reducing your speed is important for multiple reasons. Rainy days tend to be darker and sometimes foggy, reducing your ability to see what is ahead. You need more time to stop your car on wet pavement. During the first few hours of a rainstorm, accumulated oil and grease are lifted off the road, creating a slick surface until the oil is washed away. Slowing down increases your traction since more of your tire tread will be touching the pavement. Puddles often build up on the road during a heavy rain. Slowing down in wet weather reduces the chances of skidding or hydroplaning, while making it easier to recover from an unexpected situation.

