**Winter Driving Advice**

Extra care needs to be taken when driving in the winter as conditions may significantly differ from other times of the year. Recent years have seen substantial flooding and prolonged heavy snowfall. In addition to longer periods of darkness adverse weather makes driving much more hazardous.

Prepare your vehicle

Ensure that your vehicle is serviced regularly and that you carry out your own checks. In particular, check:

* Lights are clean and working;
* Battery is fully charged;
* Windscreen, wiper blades and other windows are clean and the washer bottle filled with screen wash;
* Tyre condition, tread depth and pressure (including the spare);
* Brakes are working well;
* Fluids are kept topped up, especially windscreen wash, anti-freeze and oil.

It’s also prudent to have stocks of de-icer, windscreen wash, oil and anti-freeze on stand-by and ready to use.

Emergency Kit

When forecasts indicate that extreme weather is on the way, keep an emergency kit in your car, especially if you’re going on a long journey. If you need to drive in these conditions, it is recommended by road safety organisations that you carry:

* Tow rope
* A shovel
* Wellington boots
* A hazard warning triangle
* De-icing equipment
* First aid kit (in good order)
* A working torch
* A car blanket
* Warm clothes
* Emergency Rations (including hot drink in a flask)
* Mobile Phone (fully charged)

Prepare in Advance

Keep checking local/national weather broadcasts and travel bulletins – particularly for the areas along the route of the journey.

If conditions are particularly bad, it is advised that car journeys are postponed.

If travelling in potentially unsafe conditions is unavoidable:

* Make sure that someone knows where you are going and what time you are scheduled to arrive. They can then raise the alarm should you get into difficulties.
* Identify alternative routes in the event that your main choice(s) becomes impassable and keep your fuel tank near to full to avoid running out.
* Keep your mobile phone with you and fully charged so you can call for help or alert someone if you’re delayed – it could be a long walk to a phone, if you don’t have a mobile phone.
* If you can’t put together a full emergency kit for your vehicle, take extra warm clothes, boots and a torch. Consider putting some energy bars in the glove box.
* Before commencing your journey, clear all windows and mirrors completely of snow and ice (make sure the heater is blowing warm air to keep your windscreen clear).

Driving in Snow or Ice

If you find yourself driving on icy or snow covered roads, it may be necessary to adapt your driving to the conditions. Road safety organisations suggest:

* Reduce your speed to reduce the chances of skidding.
* Only travel at a speed at which you can stop within the distance you can see to be clear. In difficult conditions, speed limits themselves can often be too fast.
* Slow down in plenty of time before bends and avoid harsh braking and acceleration, or sharp steering. Always reduce your speed smoothly and in plenty of time.
* Braking on an icy or snow covered bend is extremely dangerous. The centrifugal force will continue to pull you outwards and the wheels will not grip very well. This could cause your vehicle to spin.
* To slow down on ice and snow, lift the accelerator early to allow the speed to drop sufficiently to select a lower gear. If you need to use the brakes, use very gentle pressure depressing the clutch early to avoid stalling the engine.
* Increase the gap between you and the vehicle in front. You may need up to TEN TIMES the normal distance for braking.
* Keep your vehicle well-ventilated. The car heater turned up full can make you drowsy.
* In snow, use dipped headlights and stop frequently to clean the windows, wheel arches, lights and number plates.
* During wintry weather, road surfaces are often wet and/or covered in frost and ice or snow. But this does not occur uniformly. A road will often have isolated patches of frost or ice after most of the road has thawed, for example, under bridges.