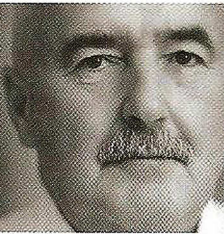


SNOW DOWN? SLOW DOWN!



The country has experienced harsh weather conditions. Gerry Buckley offers some crucial driving techniques to ensure safety for all road users

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Early December saw temperatures plummet and the onset of severe winter extremes of snow and ice. As a nation used to a temperate climate we are left stranded by the severe elements. We drivers 'freeze' at a few inches of snow, without the know how to deal with these adverse conditions.

A front-wheel drive or a four-wheel drive vehicle gives a better chance of coping but rear-wheel drives do not cope well. Many BMWs or Mercedes struggle to climb snow covered hills while seemingly meek Toyotas or Nissans proceed effortlessly.

When moving off from a stationary position or going up a hill be very gentle on the accelerator pedal to avoid wheel spin, which results in the vehicle going nowhere and bogging down. Granted we have seen the accumulation of large amounts of snow and regardless of driver training, a car will not get through. But driver knowledge and observation go some way to redressing the balance.

As snow thaws and re-freezes black ice develops into the driver's worst nightmare. One of the main areas to watch for this condition is on bridges or shaded areas. On bridge surfaces both the top and underneath are exposed to cold and wind, freezing from both above and below - faster than normal

Slow Down...



- Gentle on Brakes
- Gentle on Steering
- Gentle on Accelerator
- Anticipate and plan; adjust your driving to the existing road, weather and traffic conditions
- Leave plenty of room to manoeuvre
- Leave maximum distance between you and the vehicle in front
- Use low revs in slippery conditions. This will avoid wheel spin, especially when moving off. Use a higher gear when travelling at low speeds in order to avoid wheel spin
- When travelling down a steep hill or on bends use a lower gear as it will stabilise the vehicle
- Never slam on your brakes. If you have to brake on icy conditions, tap on your brakes lightly in quick succession (Often referred to as the tap dance technique)
- Always wear your seat belt
- Ensure tyres are in good condition and properly inflated

roads. Black ice is nearly transparent and appears as harmless as a puddle. It is more dangerous than regular ice because it is less conspicuous, but has the same characteristics. If you drive onto black ice it is impossible to brake without entering an uncontrollable skid.

When driving in these adverse conditions leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front. If you have to drive in these conditions make sure that your car is fully fit for the journey. Many vehicles are abandoned by the roadside in these conditions.

Remove all snow from your vehicle before you drive, especially all the windows. It is technically an offence not to do so, especially if there is a collision caused by snow restricting the driver's view. Ensure your vision is not obstructed with accumulations of snow either from the front, rear or sides and don't drive around with a foot of snow on your roof; think of the cost of the extra fuel consumed to carry a heavy mattress of snow.

Regardless of the road conditions, the driver is responsible to drive and control a vehicle in such a manner that it does not contribute to a road traffic collision. No sympathy will be afforded for ignorance or lacking in driving skills regardless of the weather conditions, winter or summer, if contributory in a traffic collision.

Drivers should be patient with lane discipline in this time of severe weather and give way. Courtesy is contagious. ■

Gerry Buckley is the chief driving instructor at Drive2Arrive, a company specialising in advanced driver tuition to both individuals and companies alike. www.drive2arrive.com.