



# Reciprocal News

## Driving in Spring and Summer Storm Season - May 2010.

It is that time of year again when, often on almost a daily basis, we may hear weather reports forecast severe thunderstorms and high winds. Driving in these conditions requires increased precautions and attention. Stay alert, watch for changing weather conditions and drive accordingly. Ensure vehicles are in good operating condition which includes wiper blades. Wiper blades should be inspected and replaced on a regular basis. (every 6 months depending on amount of wear and usage) The following tips are useful for all types or size of vehicle being driven.



### Keep these facts in mind during storm season

**Summer storms are unpredictable and can leave many stranded. Submerged vehicles are expensive to repair.**

#### Rain

- 1) Always turn your headlights on. This will increase visibility for oncoming vehicles but also provides tail lights and improved visibility for those behind you. (see and be seen)
- 2) Brake sooner and with less force. Surfaces can become slippery and require greater stopping distances.
- 3) Increase the distance between your vehicle and the one in front of you to allow for greater stopping distances.
- 4) Extra attention may be required after long dry spells. Engine oil and grease can build up on the road

surface. When it suddenly rains, the grease and oils may mix creating a potentially, dangerous slippery surface.

- 5) As much as possible, drive near the centre of the road, stay away from the sides. Most roads are built with a centre crown; that is they slope to the sides. This means rain will run from the centre to the sides, potentially resulting in ponding or flooding and increased danger near the curb or shoulder.

#### Severe Thunderstorms and Lightning

- 1) Be aware of approaching storms and weather warnings. Stay tuned to local radio for warnings. A Fleet Manager should notify drivers of warnings and impending potential dangers.
- 2) Extremely heavy rain may reduce visibility and make driving hazardous. Pull over to the shoulder of the road away from trees that could fall on the vehicle. Stay in vehicle, turn on emergency flashers, wait until heavy rain subsides.

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- 3) Approach intersections with increased caution. Treat traffic signals as stop signs if flashing red or not working.
- 4) Avoid flooded roads.
- 5) Hail – may result in reduced visibility, can cause damage to windshield. If windshield becomes damaged and visibility is reduced, do not drive the vehicle.
- 6) A vehicle provides better insulation against lightning than being in the open.
- 7) If you see a tornado or hear tornado warnings do not try to outrun it. Tornadoes can change direction quickly and can lift a vehicle and toss it through the air.
- 8) If you see a tornado while driving, pull over, turn off your vehicle and immediately seek shelter on foot in a nearby building. If there is no time to get indoors or if there is no nearby shelter get out of your vehicle and lie down in a ditch or a low lying area away from your vehicle. Be aware of potential flooding.

### Flood Safety

- 1) Flash floods can develop rapidly and unexpectedly within minutes from heavy rain, streams or rivers overflow or beaver dam breaks.
- 2) There may not be any warning of flash flood conditions.
- 3) If flash flood conditions are



known, do not drive unless absolutely necessary.

- 4) Do not drive through flooded areas including underpasses. Find another route around the flooding. If there is no other route move to higher ground and wait for flooding to subside.
- 5) Even if the water appears to be shallow enough to cross, do not try it. The water may hide dips, holes or washed out roads. Flooding can scour away the road surface and the ground underneath it.
- 6) 15 cm (six inches) of water will reach the bottom of most passenger vehicle which may cause loss of control or stalling.
- 7) 25 cm (one foot) of water will float many vehicles. 50 cm (two feet) of rushing water can sweep away most vehicles.

- 8) If, during heavy rains, your vehicle stalls in a potential flood area, abandon it and immediately climb to higher ground for safety. If either the depth of water or rushing water makes this unsafe, call 911 and seek emergency help.

### Skidding & Hydroplaning in Rainy Conditions

- 1) Hydroplaning results when water in front of your vehicle tires builds up faster than the weight of the vehicle can push out of the way. The water creates a thin film and the vehicle “floats” resulting in loss of traction, steering and control. The following tips may help you to avoid a potentially serious situation;

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2) Skids can be prevented by slowing down and driving carefully relative to the weather conditions. Steer and brake with a light touch. When you need to stop or slow, do not brake hard or lock the wheels.

3) If you find yourself in a skid, remain calm, ease foot off gas and carefully steer in the direction you want the front of the vehicle to go. For vehicles without “anti-lock” brakes; avoid using the brakes. “Steering into the skid” will bring the back end of the vehicle in line with the front end. For vehicles with anti-lock brakes (ABS), brake firmly as you steer into the skid.

4) Hydroplaning can be avoided by keeping tires properly inflated and maintaining good tire tread. Replace tires that become worn. Slow down when roads are wet and stay away from puddles. Try to drive in the tire tracks of the vehicle on the road in front of you.

5) If you find yourself hydroplaning, do not brake or turn suddenly as this could put the vehicle into a skid. Ease off the accelerator until the vehicle slows down and you can feel the road again. If you need to brake do so gently with a light pumping action. If your vehicle has ABS, brake normally.

6) A defensive driver always adjusts speed to the weather and driving conditions.

In conclusion, be aware of developing weather and the potential for storms. Make sure your vehicles are ready for the expected conditions. Slow down and drive according to the weather conditions. If you would like to discuss driver safety or related vehicle topics please contact:

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