



Fog and Ice Tips



Fog can be a killer on the road. Construction crews are old hands at getting around in sleet, snow, ice and storm debris. But fog is insidious because it doesn't always slow you down. It just blinds you. And watch that ice, it's treacherous.

Fog, Fog, and More Fog

How many times have you read about mammoth pileups like the 99-vehicle disaster that killed 13 people and injured 50 on a Tennessee interstate in 1990? After that accident, the state installed a sophisticated fog-detection and warning system, consisting of computerized weather-monitoring stations, radar, overhead and roadside message boards, and even swing gates to cut off access to the interstate when fog threatens.

But the most sophisticated fog-warning program is worthless if drivers in foggy conditions don't slow down, turn on their lights, and keep a close watch on the vehicles around them.

Here are some tips for foggy weather driving:

- Slow down. Reduce speed gradually.
- Realize that judgement of distance is impaired.
- Use low-beam headlights. Do not drive with only parking or fog lights on.
- Roll down your windows so you can hear the traffic better.
- Turn off your radio to hear what's going on around you.
- Use your horn to let others know you're there.
- Use wipers and defrosters to keep your windshield clear.
- Avoid passing other vehicles.
- Don't stop unless absolutely necessary.
- If your vehicle stalls or is disabled, turn off your headlights/turn on your hazard lights/and keep your seat belt fastened.

Fog occurs most in the spring and the fall, when temperatures change drastically from minute to minute. In and around the mountains, fog is an everyday occurrence. Keep your Fog Safety Tips in the storage compartment of your vehicle. Maybe they'll save your life.

Slipping and Sliding Away

In most parts of the country, winter road conditions run from about October to April. Snow and ice cause many slips, slides, and fender benders during the winter season.

Many company vehicle drivers can't stay home when snow threatens, so they're obliged to start their engines, check their windshields for ice, and gingerly creep out onto the main roads, maintaining constant control of their vehicles.

With snow and ice, that's easier said than done. Step one is clearing the windows while the vehicle is standing still. Start the engine so you can activate your defrosters, but don't move that vehicle one inch until your peripheral vision is 100 percent clear. Failing to clear your windows of frost, snow, sleet, and ice is like playing Russian roulette.

If the driver in front of you has not cleared his iced-up, snow-covered rear window, he can't see you. Drop back at least four or five car lengths, and try to anticipate the driver's next move. If your lights are on, the driver might notice you and maybe give you a better guess of what his next move will be.

The bigger your rig, the more time you will need to come to a complete stop. Likewise, the bigger the load, the greater your stopping distance. The variables combined with poor road surface conditions can double or triple the distance you need to stop.

Experience, good sense, and sound judgement are your best strategies. Don't be a loser in bad driving weather. If conditions worsen, find a "safe harbor" (that's a nautical term that says find a place to anchor your boat in a cove until the seas calm.)