



SAFETY TIPS WHEN DRIVING IN DANGEROUS WEATHER

We have compiled the following information developed by several government agencies including the City of Fort Collins Office of Emergency Management, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Atmosphere (CIRA) in order to provide you with possible actions to take during a crisis, such as a tornado, hail storm, or blizzard. We recommend that you take whatever action is necessary to maintain your safety.

GENERAL HAZARDOUS DRIVING CONDITIONS

- Use available information to evaluate the situation. If there is an explosion or other factor that makes it difficult to control the vehicle, pull over. Stop the car, and set the parking brake.
- If the emergency could impact the physical stability of the roadway, avoid overpasses, bridges, power lines, signs, and other hazards.
- If a power line falls on your car, you are at risk of electrical shock. Stay inside the vehicle until a trained person removes the wire.
- Windy conditions adversely affect all vehicles. In windy conditions, your best course of action is to slow down. Speed and wind make for a very dangerous driving situation. Strong gusts can blow a car, cyclist, or motorcyclist off course. Gusty wind can be one of the trickier driving conditions, especially when it is rapidly changing direction and intensity. Turn on and listen for weather information for the area that you are in or driving to.
- When traffic signals are out, except when directed to proceed by a police officer or traffic control signal, every driver approaching an intersection should come to a complete stop before entering the intersection. After having stopped, the driver shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle which has entered the intersection from another highway or which is approaching so closely on said highway as to constitute an immediate hazard during the time when the driver is moving across or within the intersection. If two or more vehicles reach the four-way stop intersection at the same time, the driver of the vehicle on the left shall yield the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right.
- As with any emergency, local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, listen to the radio for information.
- Auto emergency kits should contain as a minimum: blankets and warm clothing, booster cables and tools, bottled water, canned fruits and nuts, first aid kit, flashlight and batteries, traction mats or chains, a shovel, and emergency prescription medication.

TORNADOES

If you are in the path of a tornado in an urban area:

- Do not try to out-drive the storm – abandon your vehicle as soon as possible. Find a safe refuge, such as a concrete building, and get inside, away from windows and preferably under something sturdy.
- If an appropriate shelter is not nearby, lie flat in the nearest ditch, culvert, excavation, or ravine, and cover your head with your hands. You will be safer here than in your vehicle. Make sure you are not in a spot where your car can roll over you.
- Highway overpasses should not be used for shelter, except as a last resort. If you must use an overpass for shelter, pull your vehicle completely off the roadway. Wedge yourself between the steel rafters and where the dirt berm meets the road.

If you are in the path of a tornado in a rural area:

- If the road and traffic volume permit, and you are still a reasonable distance away, try to drive out of the tornado's pathway.
- If your road options are too limited, there is too much traffic, or you do not know which way the tornado is moving, follow the advice above for city dwellers.

LARGE HAIL

- If there's a safe place to stop nearby (like inside a garage, under a highway overpass, or beneath a service station awning), do so. Make sure to pull off the highway completely.
- Do not seek shelter under a tree; it's common for trees to lose their branches during severe storms.
- Stay inside your car until it stops hailing. Your vehicle will provide reasonable protection.
- Move away from your car windows. If possible, lie face down on the floor or on the seat with your back to the windows, and cover your eyes. If you have small children, protect them by keeping them underneath you, and be sure to cover their eyes, too.

BLIZZARDS

- Stay in your vehicle, as disorientation occurs quickly in wind-driven snow and bitter cold. People have been lost within a hundred feet of their vehicle.
- Run the motor about ten minutes every half hour for heat, but:
 1. Open the window slightly for fresh air and to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
 2. Make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked.
- Make yourself visible to rescuers:
 1. Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
 2. Tie a colored cloth to your antenna or door.
 3. Raise the hood after the snow stops to indicate trouble.
- Exercise from time to time to keep blood circulating and stay warm — vigorously move your arms, legs, fingers and toes.

FLOODS

- Learn the safest route from your home or place of business to areas that are safe from high winds or flooding. If there is a flood, you may only have minutes to get to safety.
- Decide on a meeting place away from home where you and your family will gather if you become separated (this will be useful in other types of disasters as well).
- Be alert to signs of flooding. If floodwaters are threatening your home, evacuate immediately. Move quickly to higher ground.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Shortcuts or alternate routes may be blocked or damaged by floodwaters.
- If you are driving and come upon rapidly rising waters, turn around and find another route. The water may appear calm on the surface, but could be flowing rapidly below. Furthermore, the roadway may have been washed away by the water and no longer exist. The depth of the water may not be obvious, and two feet of water will carry away most automobiles. Most flood fatalities are caused by people attempting to drive through water.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately. Move to a safe area before access is cut off by floodwater.
- Be aware that floods are deceptive. Do not wade into flooded areas. Turn around and go back to higher ground.
- Never drive across a flooded road. The road could be washed, out and rapidly rising water could lift your car and carry it away. As little as six inches of floodwater can cause you to lose control of your vehicle. Two feet can sweep it away. If you find floodwaters on the road while driving, turn around and find an alternate route.

HURRICANES

- Match your speed with road conditions. Cars can quickly become uncontrollable — even at very modest speeds — when driving on roads damaged with potholes, or covered with mud or debris.
- Visibility may be limited. Debris piles and large trucks carrying heavy machinery can obstruct your line of sight. You will not be able to make the right decisions if you cannot see the road clearly.
- Maintain a safe distance when following heavy equipment and trucks hauling debris, as debris may dislodge and trucks can make slow wide turns; both potentially create a roadway hazard.
- Traffic patterns may be shifted in work zones. Obey posted work zone speed limit at all times. Be aware of equipment and workers on or near the road.
- Constantly scan for pedestrians who can quickly lose their footing maneuvering around debris, creating another road hazard for drivers. Pedestrians are sometimes hard to see behind debris piles or taller vehicles.
- Traffic signals may not work. Treat any intersection with non-working traffic signals as an "all-way" stop. Be prepared to stop at every intersection.
- Road signs may have been damaged or destroyed — be prepared to yield to a pedestrian or another driver, or even to stop unexpectedly.
- Know where you are going and give yourself ample time to make your trip.
- Restrict your driving to daylight hours, if possible.
- Move away from your car windows; if possible, lie face down on the floor or on the seat with your back to the windows, and cover your eyes. If you have small children, protect them by keeping them underneath you, and be sure to cover their eyes, too.

EARTHQUAKES

- If driving when an earthquake strikes, stop the car and remain in the car until the shaking has stopped. The car's suspension system may make the car shake violently during the quake, but it's still a safe place to be. Try to avoid stopping near or under buildings, overpasses, and utility wires. When the quaking has stopped, proceed cautiously, avoiding bridges and other elevated structures that might have been damaged.