

TOOLBOX TALK – ‘Winter Driving Checklist’

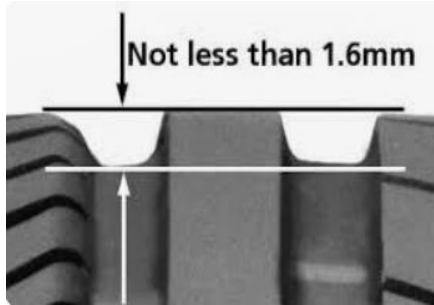
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Enclosed is a winter driving checklist I rolled out prior to the recent cold snap. I obtained information from the RSA and HSA websites. It covers tips for driving in the winter and in adverse conditions, from being prepared prior to the journey, being aware of hazards on the road, and tips in the event of a breakdown.

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Contributor’s Shared Advice - Winter Driving Checklist:

- 1. Service & Winter Check** - Always make sure your car / van is serviced and winter ready for the months ahead.
- 2. Check your tyres** - Knowing your tyres is critical to safe driving during winter, as they are the only parts touching the road. Always ensure there is a minimum of 1.6mm thread depth and your tyres are maintained at the correct pressures as per the vehicle manufacturer’s manual. 1.6mm thread depth has been set by the Road Safety Authority and allows for water and slush to pass through the threads. If your tyre threads are less than 1.6mm, you risk aquaplaning and losing control of your vehicle. It is good practice to check your tyre pressures regularly (i.e. on a weekly basis).
 
- 3. Check & use your lights** – During daylight hours, use your dipped headlights so that others will see you. Make sure your head-lights and tail-lights are all in working order and replace any broken bulbs. Ensure lights are clear of dirt and are fully luminated.
- 4. Visibility** – Clear your windows and mirrors before you set out, carry a windscreen scraper and de-icer. Do not use hot water on the windscreen as it can crack the glass. Replace windshield wiper blades if necessary. De-mist the inside of your windows thoroughly. Make sure your windshield washer system works and is full of an anti-icing fluid. The glare from the sun can be dazzling in the winter when the sun is low in the sky, so wear sunglasses in these conditions.
- 5. Safe Distance** – Always be aware of safety distance from other cars, the Road Safety Authority recommends maintaining 2 seconds from the car in front of you. This is known as the ‘2 Second Rule’; however, in winter and in adverse conditions, this rule must be multiplied by a factor of 4 or 5. Other factors that should be considered to maintain a safe driving distance include: the time of day (if it is bright or dark), the road surface and road speed limits etc.

6. **Black Ice** - Watch out for 'black ice'. If the road looks polished or glossy it could be 'black ice' - one of winter's worst hazards. Black Ice is difficult to see; it is nearly transparent ice that often looks like a harmless puddle or is overlooked entirely. Watch out for 'black ice', especially in sheltered / shaded areas on roads, under trees and adjacent to high walls.



7. **Phones distraction** – Keeping your eyes on the road is essential for safe driving, if you're looking at your phone you are oblivious to what's happening around you.
Scary fact: if you glance at your phone for 2 seconds at 50km per hour, you'll travel up to **28 metres blind**.
8. **Be Prepared!** - You should always have a plan in the event of a breakdown. Check to see if you have breakdown assist cover as part of your insurance and have the number at the ready. In addition to this it is also recommended to:
- Ensure your hazard lights are working properly as part of your weekly checks.
 - Check that your spare wheel is in good condition and is fully inflated.
 - Carry in your vehicle the following:
 - High Visibility Vest
 - De-icer or scraper
 - A working torch
 - A pocket-sized first aid kit.
 - A jack, and tools can be handy for changing a tyre; however, only attempt to do this if you are experienced and confident in completing the task. Always ensure the vehicle is positioned on a level, hard surface at a sufficiently safe distance from the road.
9. **Be informed!** - Listen to local weather and traffic reports on the radio or via a local weather App and make travel decisions based on this information.

NEVER EVER DRIVE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

For Further Information:

- www.rsa.ie
- www.winterready.ie
- www.met.ie
- www.theaa.ie