

# Inclement weather

This handout offers advice for riding during inclement weather. With each season comes a range of riding challenges all of which need to be managed safely.

## The weather conditions discussed in this handout are:

- Rain
- Snow and Ice
- Bright Sunlight
- High Winds
- Fog

## Rain

The Highway Code gives advice in relation to doubling potential stopping distances when riding on a wet road, but there is so much more to consider in wet conditions.

Ensure your screen and visor are in good condition. Be able to set the ventilation system on your helmet to assist in demisting your visor and spectacles if worn. Consider using an anti-fog insert or product. (Washing up liquid can be a cheap alternative.)

Consider if you are struggling to see other drivers that they may struggle to see you even more. Consider dipped headlamps (modern machines will have lights permanently on.)

If steering is applied, a puddle may pull the bike towards the verge or centre of the road. Apply a firm grip to prevent unwanted change of direction.

Deep water may cause “aquaplaning” this is where the tyre treads are unable to clear sufficient water and a wedge of water forms preventing the tyre from gripping the road. It feels like riding on ice and steering and braking capabilities are lost. Gently close the throttle and retain a firm grip on the handlebars, do not brake or attempt to steer

as any input is likely to be excessive when the grip returns. The grip will return within a short time do not overreact.

If possible avoid standing water.

### Consider:

- What is in it?
- Does it have potentially damaging pot holes that are now concealed?
- How deep is it?
- Will it flood the air intake of the machine?  
If so don't ride into it as the engine may “hydro-lock” causing major damage.

If you must go through it and it is not too deep keep engine revs high but speed slow.

When you reach the other side dry the brakes by applying them in a safe area.

## Snow & Ice

Best practice is to avoid riding. If it is absolutely essential to ride in the snow and ice the following may help.

Highway Code advice for stopping distances in the snow and ice is they need to be increased by up to 10 times.

On packed snow and ice the tyres have virtually no grip available. Whilst it is possible to get a motorcycle moving reasonably effectively, stopping it or changing direction can be much more difficult.

Gentle acceleration in a higher gear may assist in moving away. Slowing down is best achieved using the gears. A common problem in snow and ice is riding at a generic speed which is perceived to be "safe". At times it may be that 40mph is acceptable but at other times 15mph may be far too fast.

Where you need to be able to change direction or stop, reduce speed gradually. Be aware that the machine may skid. ABS systems are designed to allow the wheel to lock at very low speeds ( otherwise they would never stop) severely reduced grip may mean the machine slides forward at a slow speed.

Coarse steering input may induce a skid. Be smooth with steering in order not to break grip. If you have to steer do it gently until you are back to the course you wish the machine to follow.

Be aware of the effect of extreme cold. Make sure your motorcycle kit is fit for the job.

Minor roads are not always treated for ice, if there is evidence of road salt on major routes, or the temperature is low, take extra care. In extreme conditions stay on the major routes if possible.

Understand where a micro climate is likely to occur. Ice may form in isolation in low lying areas, under trees or on bridges and will remain for longer in shaded areas.

## Bright Sunlight

Bright sunlight may affect your vision. If it does you must slow down. In winter the sun is lower and may affect you even more.

If you decide to wear sun glasses be aware they may mist up behind your visor and reduce your vision. Your vision will also be

reduced in a tunnel or shaded area. Take extra care when emerging from junctions and if in any doubt don't move.

A peak on your crash helmet or a tinted visor strip may assist.

## High Winds

Be aware that wind will affect motorcycles in different ways. Faired machines will be more susceptible to wind and speeds may need to be reduced.

When passing a high sided vehicle be aware the wind affecting you will change, so ensure you give them sufficient space. If you see them being affected don't pass.

Be especially careful if crossing exposed bridges.

## Fog

Fog and mist cause some of the most dangerous and difficult riding conditions.

Use dipped beam, if fitted use your fog-lights when the visibility drops below 100m. Don't forget that when the fog clears, you will need to turn the fog-lights off again as soon as possible, otherwise you may dazzle other road users. Remember in patchy fog, you may need to turn your fog-lights off in the clearer patches, and on again when the fog gets thicker.

Avoid using full beam, even when there's nobody else around, because the fog will reflect the light back at you, and that has the effect of reducing, rather than improving, your visibility.

Periodically wipe your visor or turn your head sideways to clear the visor. Sometimes the reduced visibility is as a result of mist formed on the outside.