

CLASS-DRIVING TIPS - SECTION FIVE – DIFFICULT CONDITIONS / EMERGENCIES

ROAD SURFACE CHANGE

Watch for a change in colour or texture of the road surface ahead.

Anticipate a difference in the vehicle handling as it passes over any change in the road surface. When you are on loose or slippery surfaces avoid sudden braking or steering.

You may need to slow until you check how your vehicle reacts to a surface change.

CLASS-DRIVING TIPS - SECTION FIVE – DIFFICULT CONDITIONS / EMERGENCIES

SLIPPERY SURFACE

On slippery surfaces, handle the controls smoothly and gently; and slow down early.

Keep the gear lower so that your faster engine will stabilise the vehicle. That means in an auto switch on 'power-shift' and take the car out of overdrive, or even a lower gear if it is very skiddy. Slow down earlier than usual as you approach intersections, bends and hill crests.

Avoid skids by keeping the gears low and the controls gentle.

CLASS-DRIVING TIPS - SECTION FIVE – DIFFICULT CONDITIONS / EMERGENCIES

SUMMER RAINS

Summer rains mean slippery roads.

During a long, hot, dry spell fragments of rubber, carbon and drops of oil settle onto the road. When it first rains these float to the surface making a very slippery solution. If you have to drive in the early part of a summer rain, slow down, change down and handle the controls very gently.

Put your skid control skills into practice during summer rains.

CLASS-DRIVING TIPS - SECTION FIVE – DIFFICULT CONDITIONS / EMERGENCIES

FROSTY MORNINGS

Frost and ice are very slippery.

When you have to drive on a frosty or icy morning, plan to start drive a little earlier. Three to five minutes earlier means a substantial reduction in speed on a cross town trip. Keeping your speed down, your controls smooth and your car in low gear makes a huge improvement to your control.

Plan to commence your trip early so that you can be slow, relaxed and smooth.

CLASS-DRIVING TIPS - SECTION FIVE – DIFFICULT CONDITIONS / EMERGENCIES

POT-HOLES

Avoid braking into a pot-hole.

If you can't steer around any bump, don't leave the brakes on while you hit it. Keeping the brakes on makes the vehicle hit the bump harder, and the shock is transferred into the vehicle.

So, brake well before any bump and release the brakes before you reach it.

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DEBRIS ON THE ROAD

Never drive over anything on the road, go around it.

Rocks, sticks or pieces of metal may appear harmless, but may become very dangerous if they are flicked up and pierce through the floor of the vehicle. People have been impaled by debris. My brother once drove over what he thought was a bag on the road; it turned out to be a tree stump which had fallen from a truck. The stump pierced the petrol tank and the vehicle burst into flames. My brother and his passengers were lucky to escape with their lives.

Avoid anything on the road.

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AVOID SKIDDING

Skidding is much easier to prevent than correct.

The warnings are feelings of extreme lightness and buoyancy. A loss of directional control may be the first sign that you are skidding. The first rule is to remove the cause of the skid. Skids are caused by braking, steering or accelerating harder than the ability of the tyres to grip the surface.

Keep your speed down and be very gentle with the controls in slippery conditions.