
Driving in Adverse Conditions

COUNTERMEASURE

Objective: To prevent accidents by developing the driver skills and judgment necessary to operate vehicle safely during adverse traction and visibility conditions.

Description: Failure to adjust to adverse conditions is a major factor in accident causation. The adverse conditions most frequently encountered cause reduced traction and reduced visibility. Reduced traction conditions include rain, snow, ice, slush and gravel. Reduced visibility conditions include twilight, darkness, rain, snow and fog. Drivers should not only develop the skills and judgment necessary to keep their own vehicle safely under control, they should also try to anticipate and be prepared to compensate for errors other drivers make during such poor driving conditions.

Questions for Management:

1. Does the driver know how to judge safe speed on slippery surfaces?
2. Does the driver know what causes jackknifing and how to prevent it?
3. Have drivers ever been trained to safely maneuver on slippery surfaces? How? When? By whom?
4. Is there a safe off-road area available to drivers for practicing vehicle handling on slippery surfaces?
5. How do trip schedules take into account the effect of inclement weather?
6. Should tire chains be used in severe weather conditions?

Maintenance Checks:

- Tire tread wear and tire pressure. Availability of tire chains when needed.
- Windshield wiper and washer condition. Mirror system.
- Proper functioning of all lighting circuits, including emergency flashers. Headlight beam aim.

Driving Tips:

Reduced traction conditions:

- Increase following distance enough to avoid a rear-end collision if other driver brakes hard.
- Use moderation in judging safe speed. To maintain a safe stopping distance, slow down, but not so much that you become a hazard to drivers behind.
- Apply brakes gently and steer without jerky movements.
- Beware when running empty or bobtailing. Lightly loaded wheels lock up easily during braking and this induces jackknifing.
- Beware of traveling too slowly on slick, banked curves. The vehicle might slide sideways into opposing traffic or off the road.

Reduced visibility conditions:

- Use moderation in judging safe speed. To maintain a safe stopping distance during reduced visibility, slow down, but not so much that you become a hazard to drivers behind.
- Keep vehicle clean, especially headlights, windshield, tail lights.
- Use emergency flashers in extreme conditions.
- Be prepared to get off road and wait for conditions to improve if necessary.