

Driving In The Fog and Rain

The recent terrible 108-vehicle pileup on foggy Highway 99 is a reminder that when the weather changes, we need to alter our driving habits. So here some Safety Tips on driving in the fog and rain:

- Sl-o-o-o-o-w down. Driving too fast is the number one cause of accidents on wet or foggy days.
- Pay attention. **Turn off the radio and turn off your cell phone.** Stop yakking with your passengers.
- Do not tailgate!
- Watch electronic warning signs. When visibility is less than 100 feet, Caltrans will flash “Dense Fog Ahead” messages.
- In thick fog, drive with your lights on low beam, reduce speed and crack open your window and listen for traffic you cannot see. Never drive with just your parking or fog lights on; use your low beam headlights. The light from high beams will reflect back and cause glare.
- Do not overdrive your headlights. Stay within the limits of your vision. You may have to stop suddenly.
- Use turn signals for all lane changes and turns well in advance so it does not surprise another driver and cause them to brake.
- Do not drive at 5-20 mph. If the fog becomes too dense, pull as far off the roadway as possible and stop, **turn on your emergency flashers**. If you do not turn on your emergency flashers, someone may see your taillights and drive into you.
- If an accident occurs in the fog, wait in your vehicle until you no longer hear any type of collisions. When safe, rapidly exit your vehicle to a safe area, preferably behind a guardrail or as far away from the road as possible. If there is no safe place next to the road, stay in your car and remain buckled up.
- Know how to defrost your car. Before turning on the defroster and blower, move the heat control to “hot” and allow the engine to warm up first. If the windshield starts to fog on the inside, open a side window slightly and turn the defroster to a higher speed. If you have an air conditioner, use it to reduce humidity and moisture collecting on the window.
- Increase your following distance between you and the vehicle in front of you and be prepared to stop within the space you can see ahead. Your braking distance is greatly increased in wet driving. Avoid crossing or passing lanes of traffic unless absolutely necessary.

- If your car has anti-lock brakes and goes into a skid, you may feel a vibration when pressing the brake pedal. Don't panic. Hold the brake pedal down firmly. Sensors in anti-lock brakes are adjusting to the wet road, which is why the pedal vibrates. Nothing is wrong, as long as you hold the brake down. Don't pump or lift your foot off the pedal.
- Drive in the tire prints of the car ahead of you. When a car hydroplanes, it's riding on a thin layer of water between the tires and the road. The water in tire prints has already been displaced, so you get better traction.
- If your car hydroplanes, hold the steering wheel steady and lightly apply brakes. When you feel the tires touch the pavement, slow until regaining control.
- Check tires and wipers. According to the Highway Patrol, many drivers in accidents say they couldn't see because their wipers smeared their windshields on a rainy day.
- Be aware of the spray coming from passing and oncoming vehicles. It may blind you temporarily, so anticipate this by increasing the speed of the wipers.
- Here in the Central Valley, most of our roads will not freeze very often as the ground beneath doesn't get that cold, so ice will only form occasionally in patches or after freezing rain. But as you approach bridges, slow down. Black ice (a thin, invisible, complete coating of ice) forms on top of bridges, causeways, or any stretch of road not paved over solid ground.

DRIVE SMART

DRIVE DEFENSIVELY

DRIVE SAFE