

REAL Torque

June 2022

Contact maintenance for any questions on 0800 80 80 69

Winter Driving

Driving in winter has its challenges. We all know that in New Zealand you can easily have four seasons in one day, especially when you are driving up and down the islands. It is important that both you and your vehicle are prepared for winter driving conditions.

Some pre-trip vehicle check reminders:

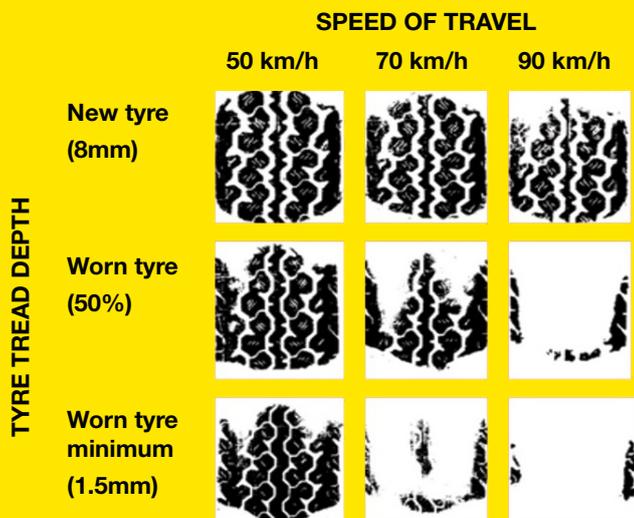
With increased water and potential ice and snow on the roads, tyre pressures and tread depth are important because tyres are the only thing that grips the road. The image below from the NZTA shows how much a tyre touches a wet road at different speeds. You can clearly see that a tyre which is down to its minimum legal tread depth has no grip and no ability to disperse water, which will result in hydroplaning.

Remember to check your tyre pressures when they are cold.

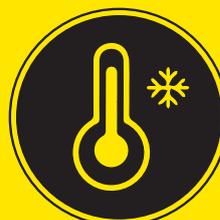


Visibility can be difficult. Keep the window washer fluid full.

HOW MUCH OF YOUR TYRE IS IN CONTACT WITH THE ROAD IN 1MM OF WATER



Drain airtanks of any moisture. Remember, a good airline is a dry airline. Check if all lights are working. The sun is a lot lower with shorter daylight hours through winter, so keep the window washer reservoir full as visibility can be difficult even at the best of times. Keeping your windows and mirrors clean improves visibility.



Travelling in winter is not all doom and gloom. Some of the best scenery you will ever see is the Desert Road covered in snow under a starry, clear night with a full moon.

The difference between a power divider and a diff lock and when to use them:

Depending on the make/model of the truck you are driving, it could be fitted with a power divider (inter-axle diff lock) and/or a diff lock. Vehicle technology is constantly changing, with variations on how to use these and to what speeds they can be used. Knowing when and how to use these properly could prevent you from slipping off the road in winter conditions, such as ice and snow.

Note: Do not ever engage these features when the wheels are slipping or spinning, as this can severely damage the components.

Power dividers or inter-axle differentials can be used at all speeds and for extended periods of time in road conditions such as rain, snow, ice, and driving off-road. These can be engaged while the vehicle is moving but ideally at speeds lower than 60km/h. It eliminates speed differences between the drive axles. Do not leave this on during normal road conditions as this could damage tyres.

Diff locks (if fitted) **should ideally only be engaged when the vehicle is stationary**. It should only be used at low speed and only be engaged in an area with poor traction because steering can be severely affected as all the drive wheels are turning at the same speed since the wheels on the same axle are locked together. This should be turned off as soon as possible.

The below image is a typical American unit with both inter-axle and diff locks. Engage the inter-axle lock first, then engage the diff locks when required. The bottom image is from the new Fuso with an inter-axle lock and a rocker switch to help free a stuck vehicle.



Inter-axle and diff locks



Inter-lock and a rocker switch

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Auxiliary brakes:

Auxiliary brakes should not be used when unloaded or lightly loaded on slippery surfaces. This could cause the vehicle to skid, with potential driveline lock ups resulting in an accident. In some vehicles, this could cause the ABS to function when driving through a curve, shutting off the aux brakes. Remember, set your speed before negotiating the hazard so there is no rushed response from you as the driver.

Being prepared for winter driving conditions:

Winter driving can be fatiguing, even more so when increased concentration is required. Be aware of the signs that you are getting tired and pull over, even if it's for just 15 minutes, as this can make an enormous difference.

When you can, plan your trip to avoid areas or times with weather warnings and potential road closures.

Carry warm clothes, a blanket, and extra food and water to stay hydrated. You never know when the road may close due to snow, slips, or treacherous conditions.

Tips and Tricks



TR Tips

- ▶ Be vigilant with pre, spot, and post check vehicle inspections.
- ▶ Driving in winter can increase fatigue. You need to be well rested before your shift, and remember to take regular breaks.
- ▶ Increase following distances or following range if using adaptive cruise control.
- ▶ Lights and wipers mean everything to a vehicle operator in their specific environment. Have lights on if the vehicle isn't fitted with day running lights.
- ▶ Travel times may increase, so take this into account with your start, rest, and finish times.
- ▶ When possible, keep the fuel tank full overnight to reduce moisture inside the tank.
- ▶ Monitor cab temperature. Don't allow it to get too cosy.
- ▶ Read the road and drive at a safe speed for the conditions.

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