

REAL

June 2026

Torque

Winter Driving

Winter driving in New Zealand can change from clear skies to heavy rain, fog, frost, or snow in a matter of hours. Taking a few minutes to prepare yourself and your vehicle can significantly reduce risk and help keep you moving safely.

Contact maintenance for any questions on 0800 80 80 69

Winter Vehicle Checks That Matter:

Winter conditions can quickly reduce available grip. Wet roads, standing water, frost, ice, and snow all increase stopping distances and make vehicle control more challenging.

As road conditions deteriorate, drivers need to allow greater following distances, reduce speed, and avoid sudden steering, braking, or acceleration inputs.

Tyres worn close to the legal minimum tread depth may still be compliant, but their performance on wet roads can be significantly reduced, increasing the risk of hydroplaning and loss of control.

As part of your pre-trip inspection, always check tyre condition and pressures while the tyres are cold to ensure an accurate reading.



Your tyres are your only contact with the road. Maintaining correct tyre pressures and tread depth is one of the simplest ways to improve winter safety.

Air Systems - Don't Forget The Basics

Drain air tanks regularly during winter. Moisture in the air system can affect performance and increase the risk of freezing in colder regions.

Visibility - See and Be Seen

Winter roads throw up more spray, mud, and grime. A full washer bottle and effective wiper blades are essential for maintaining visibility throughout the day.



Winter can also provide some of New Zealand's most spectacular driving scenery. Always enjoy it safely by planning ahead and driving to the conditions.

Using Traction Aids Correctly:

Inter-Axle Lock (Cross Lock):

An inter-axle lock improves traction by preventing speed differences between the drive axles. It can be useful when driving in rain, snow, ice, gravel, or other low-grip conditions and should be disengaged once normal traction returns.

Diff Lock:

A diff lock provides additional traction by locking the drive wheels on an axle together. It should only be used when extra traction is required, engaged before wheel spin occurs, and disengaged as soon as conditions improve to maintain vehicle handling and prevent drivetrain damage.

Never engage traction aids while wheels are spinning, as serious drivetrain damage can occur.

Cold Weather and Batteries:

Cold temperatures place additional strain on vehicle batteries and electrical systems. A battery that performs well in summer can quickly show signs of weakness during winter.

If you notice slow cranking, dim lights, battery warning lights, or electrical faults, report them early before they become a breakdown.

Simple checks such as ensuring battery terminals are clean and secure can help prevent unexpected breakdowns.



Winter Safety Reminder:

Arriving 10 minutes late is always better than not arriving at all. Slow down, leave extra space, and drive to the conditions.

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Using Auxiliary Brakes Safely:

Auxiliary braking systems, including exhaust brakes, compression brakes (Jake brakes), and retarders can be effective tools when used correctly, but extra care is required on slippery surfaces. Avoid aggressive use of auxiliary brakes when lightly loaded or driving on wet, icy, or loose surfaces, as this can increase the risk of wheel lock-up and loss of control.

Always reduce speed before entering corners or hazards and use smooth driving inputs.

Be Prepared:

Winter driving often requires greater concentration and can be more tiring than normal driving. Pay attention to the signs of fatigue and take a break before it begins to affect your driving.

Before setting out, check weather forecasts and road conditions, particularly when travelling through alpine or remote areas. Carry warm clothing, water, food, and a charged phone in case severe weather, road closures, or other unexpected delays leave you stopped for an extended period.

Tips and Tricks



TR Tips

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Check weather forecasts and road conditions before travelling, particularly when travelling through alpine or remote areas.
- ▶ Reduce speed and use smooth steering, braking, and acceleration inputs when driving on wet, icy, or slippery roads.
- ▶ Be aware of changing conditions throughout the day. Roads that are clear in the morning can quickly become hazardous due to rain, frost, snow, or reduced visibility.

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