



Security Safety Tip

How to Drive in a Thunderstorm

Avoid driving in a thunderstorm



The safest way to drive in a thunderstorm is to, in fact, not drive at all. A typical storm will last around 30 minutes. If you know a storm is coming, it is highly advisable to simply wait it out at your current location. If you find yourself driving in a thunderstorm, the safest thing for you to do is to turn on your emergency brakes and pull onto the side of the road to wait it out.

Safety tips for driving in a thunderstorm

Waiting it out is not always possible and the majority of drivers are more inclined to rough it out instead. If you must or persist to drive in a storm, be aware of the dangers.

Dangers of driving in a thunderstorm

Low Visibility



If you're driving in a storm, don't expect to see much of what's in front of you. Rain will be pouring down, so it's likely you can't even see the car in front of you very well.

Low Traction

Due to the rain, your car will have very low traction during a thunderstorm. This means it will take longer to brake and reduce your overall control over the car.

Puddles of Water

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Standing bodies of water may occur on the road during a thunderstorm. Drive through these with extreme caution, as just two feet of water can carry most cars off the road. These puddles can also be misleading to the eye, as even a small bit of water that appears harmless can be hiding mud, a pothole or dangerous depth.

Flash Floods

One great danger of a thunderstorm is the disasters that might follow in its wake. Hail, another very real possibility, hail not only makes a lot of noise, it can damage your car as well.

Lightning



While being in your car is actually one of the safer places to wait out a storm (excluding walled and roofed houses), lightning poses more dangers than just electrocution. If lightning strikes close to you, especially at night, you can suffer from temporary blindness—which is really bad if you're driving in already dangerous conditions. It can also start fires and knock down power lines.

Wind

During severe thunderstorms, the wind can grow strong enough to jerk your car, forcing you to keep a firm grip on the wheel to avoid ending up in the grass or the wrong lane.

Flying Debris

Along with this strong wind comes the objects it can carry. Tree branches and other various items can get tossed into your car or its path while driving during a thunderstorm.

Other Drivers

This, perhaps, is the great threat of all. While driving in a thunderstorm, you may still encounter impatient drivers who tailgate, pass, or speed during the storm. You may also have nervous drivers or just more drivers due to congestion. With reduced traction and visibility, simply driving behind someone can become a dangerous challenge in a thunderstorm.



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How to drive as safely as possible in a thunderstorm

Keep your doors shut and windows up



This seems fairly self-explanatory, but it can make the difference between whether or not you suffer should lightning be prevalent in the area, and being fully enclosed in the vehicle can also help drivers avoid distractions from rain or thunder.

Drive slowly

Again, this should go without saying. Speed limits are set for normal driving condition and should be reduced in aberrant weather.

Don't tailgate

Leaving space between yourself and the car in front of you is always a good idea, but if you're battling a storm it becomes a necessity.

Turn your car lights on



Remember that visibility is low, and one of the best ways to be seen by other drivers is to have your car lights on.

Observe local hazard light laws

You should also be aware of local laws regarding hazard lights; in Florida and many other states, it is illegal to drive with hazards in the rain. This is because the blinking lights can be a distraction to already dangerous driving and can make it harder to see turn signals or brake lights.

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Avoid bridges

Bridges have a higher chance of collapsing during a thunderstorm, so wait for it to pass before crossing one. Of course, all of this changes if you're not marching through a thunderstorm but towards a tornado.

How to Drive through a Tornado

When it comes to driving and tornadoes, a lot of dangerous misconceptions exist. Instincts often lead us astray here, and it's important to know what you should do and what you shouldn't do if you are driving when a tornado strikes.

Do not try to outrun the tornado



It's tempting to floor it when you see a funnel cloud tunneling down from a dark sky. However, this is a not a wise choice. A tornado's path is unpredictable and it can switch directions are random. You could be driving away from a tornado when it's suddenly charges down your path. Even F1 tornadoes (the least powerful class) can have winds up to 300 mph and speeds up to 70 mph. Also keep in mind that the faster you drive the easier it becomes for the tornado to move or lift your car.

Pull your car onto the side of the road and seek shelter

If there are buildings around, enter one and go to its lowest level without windows. If no such shelter is available, find the lowest point on the ground and lie down, covering your head with your hands. Try to avoid places with trees or other objects that might get picked up by the tornado.

Do NOT seek shelter under your car

The tornado may drop objects on your car, which could end up crushing you, or it could blow your car off you, removing your shelter.

Do NOT seek shelter under a bridge or in a tunnel



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This may seem like the logical choice, but it's a deadly mistake. Because tunnels lack four walls and bridges have no walls, these structures do not protect you from a tornado's winds. Instead, tunnels may act as a channel that increases a tornado's wind, making it a more dangerous place to be. Again, the best tactic is to avoid driving in these conditions, but if you find that an unfeasible option, please drive safe and follow as many safety precautions as possible.