

The FTAI have prepared this advice guide for van drivers and fleet operators to aid them in planning for challenging driving conditions. For all severe weather events it is essential that vehicles are maintained to the highest level if they are to be operated in extreme weather conditions and drivers are suitably prepared and briefed for the task ahead.

Weather Warnings are presented in three categories.

## STATUS YELLOW

Weather alert  
**BE AWARE**

Alerts are to notify those who are at risk because of their location and/or activity, and to allow them to take preventative action. Yellow level weather alerts are for weather conditions that do not pose an immediate threat to the general population, but only to those exposed to risk by nature of their location and/or activity.

## STATUS ORANGE

Weather warning  
**BE PREPARED**

Warnings are for weather conditions which have the capacity to impact significantly on people in the affected areas. An Orange level weather warning implies that those in the affected areas should prepare themselves in an appropriate way for the anticipated conditions.

## STATUS RED

Severe weather warning  
**TAKE ACTION**

Severe weather warnings are a rare event and implies that recipients take action to protect themselves and/or their properties; this could be staying indoors; or by other specific actions aimed at mitigating the effects of the weather conditions.

# Operating in Snow and Icy Conditions tips

## VAN DRIVERS

- Ensure your vehicle is roadworthy and has sufficient fuel for your journey. Carry out the following safety checks F.L.O.W.E.R.  
**Fuel, Lights, Oil, Water, Electrics, Rubber**
- Ensure you have appropriate clothing you should prepare for delays and the possibility that you could have to spend longer in the vehicle than normal:
  - Warm jacket
  - Gloves and hat
  - Winter boots
  - Spare clothing
  - Bottles of water
  - Extra food and a flask of warm drink
  - A blanket
  - Sunglasses (to avoid snow dazzle)
  - Mobile phone and charger
- Allow more time for your journey.
- Obtain weather information before you set off and keep up to date with changing conditions and closed routes via the radio or by regularly calling into base when stationary.
- Carry a shovel and a couple of strong sacks of Kitty litter (to put under the drive wheels if the vehicle becomes stuck).
- Ensure the whole of your vehicle (especially your windscreen and mirrors) is fully cleared of ice and snow before moving off.
- Avoid any sudden braking, steering or acceleration and allow for the fact other drivers may get into difficulties.
- Lower your speed and keep a good distance from other vehicles – allow 10 times the normal stopping distances. All braking must be gentle and over much longer distances, especially when driving vehicles with a trailer attached.
- Be careful on bridges and overpasses, they freeze before the road.
- Avoid unnecessary lane changes.
- Drive, turn, and brake slowly.
- During a skid, keep your eyes on the road, and don't slam on the brakes.
- Falling snow can reduce visibility dramatically, use dipped headlights and reduce your speed.
- Road markings and traffic signs can be obscured by snow. Take extra care at junctions.
- Don't attempt to overtake a snow plough or vehicle spreading salt, unless you are sure the road is clear, and the conditions allow it to be done safely.
- When driving at night, be alert for a drop in temperature. If the steering feels light, you may be driving on ice, so ease your speed as soon as it is safe to do so.
- If your vehicle becomes stuck in deep snow, use the highest gear you can to improve traction. Then try alternating between reverse and the forward gear until forward motion is possible. Avoid continual revving in a low gear, which could lead to the drive wheel digging a deeper rut.
- Don't stop on the hard shoulder of the road especially in low visibility situations. When driving in winter, especially 'blinding snow', other vehicles can mistake your position for being on the road and as a result, may slam into the back of your vehicle.
- Be extra alert for pedestrians and cyclists on the road as visibility is lower during bad weather conditions, and pedestrians are usually more impatient to get out of the cold. They may make quick and rash decisions when crossing the road. Minibus drivers should also be extra cautious and slow when approaching bus-stops as melting snow on roads turns to slush and can cause side gutters to fill up and splash passengers.

## VAN FLEET OPERATORS

- Only operate when it is safe to do so.
- Pay heed to the national weather alerts and adapt operational activity as necessary. The safety of drivers and other road users is of the highest priority.
- Are appropriate systems in place for employees who have to drive for work in adverse weather conditions?
- Do employees know how to handle vehicles in adverse weather conditions? Have you communicated this to them?
- Is there a plan in place for employees in the event of emergencies such as a collision, breakdown or getting stuck/stranded?
- Ensure you know your drivers' routes and check in regularly with them.
- Update drivers and customers regularly and be prepared to change your plan or scrap it entirely and recall your drivers if the conditions deteriorate to an unsafe level.
- Always plan for an alternative route to allow for road closures during bad weather

## USEFUL WEBSITES

<https://www.met.ie/warnings/today>

<https://www.rsa.ie/road-safety/campaigns/severe-weather>

[https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Vehicles\\_at\\_Work/Driving\\_for\\_Work/Winter\\_Driving\\_Tips/](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Vehicles_at_Work/Driving_for_Work/Winter_Driving_Tips/)