
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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CAL FIRE Urges Safety on the Road

Sacramento – After a dry period, California is expected to experience heavy rainfall, which has prompted CAL FIRE to urge drivers to be safe on the road. Each year between 450,000 and 500,000 traffic accidents are reported in California alone. One person is killed every two and a half hours, and one person is injured every two minutes, as a result of a traffic collision. Ninety-five percent of crashes are caused by human error. With rain and snow those numbers change. This winter season, CAL FIRE is advising all drivers to take extra precaution while behind the wheel.

Last year, CAL FIRE responded to over 6,600 vehicle accidents in the months of December, January and February. These accidents are often caused by motorists driving at unsafe speeds for the conditions of the road. Officials warn that it's important to use the surrounding road conditions to gauge safe speeds, rather than relying solely on the posted speed limit.

“The winter season is a treacherous time of year to be behind the wheel of a vehicle,” said Battalion Chief Doug Ferro, CAL FIRE’s department safety officer. “With the increase in road hazards during cold months, it’s important to ensure you take the extra precautions necessary to make every drive a safe one and that starts with your vehicle. Make sure your vehicle is in good working order because an unmaintained vehicle can be unsafe on wet and slippery roads.”

To help steer clear of vehicle accidents this winter, CAL FIRE recommends the following tips:

- Use weather conditions as a guide to slow down.
- Use your low-beam headlights whenever it is raining.
- Slow down at the first sign of rain, drizzle, or snow on the road. This is when many road pavements are most slippery because oil and dust have not been washed off the roadway.
- If it starts to rain on a hot day, pavement can be slippery for the first few minutes. Heat causes the oil in the asphalt to come to the surface.
- If the roadway is wet, you should travel at least 5 to 10 mph slower than you normally would. In a very heavy rainstorm, you may not be able to see more than 100 feet ahead.
- Avoid sudden stops and quick direction changes, and be sure to leave additional distance between your vehicle and the one ahead.
- If visibility is limited, slow down and keep a constant watch for other vehicles.
- Be mindful of icy roads. Black ice can be nearly invisible and temperatures do not have to be below freezing for ice to form on the road surfaces.
- If the vehicle begins to slide while driving on ice or snow, avoid using the brake. Instead, slowly release the gas pedal and steer the vehicle in the right direction.

For more information on winter driving safety visit the CHP website at http://www.chp.ca.gov/html/safetytips/winter_driving.html.