



ASSOCIATION OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS IN SCOTLAND

NEWS RELEASE

Thursday, 15 January 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

WINTER ISN'T OVER YET SO DOUBLE CHECK BEFORE YOU DRIVE

MOTORISTS don't have to be reminded that this winter has been one of the coldest since 1999 with parts of the east coast experiencing above normal rainfalls while higher areas in the north of Scotland have encountered greater than normal snowfalls during the past decade.

Normal weather at this time of year always raises a number of safety concerns with police forces throughout Scotland and these concerns are heightened by extreme conditions.

Now the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS), as the second part of its annual "*Gear Up For Winter Campaign*", would like to remind everyone of the simple precautions they can take to prepare themselves and their vehicles before taking to the roads and not get caught out. The three-day-long information campaign will run from 07:00 on Friday, 16 January to 07:00 on Monday, 19 January and is designed to raise road user awareness of potential dangers that can be encountered when driving during the winter and in such abnormal weather conditions as experienced lately.

During the weekend, officers in all eight police forces will, if necessary, stop motorists and provide advice or give warnings. If necessary, offenders can expect to be reported with some of the offences carrying a penalty of £30.

Senior road policing officers in all eight Scottish police forces recognise that it is vitally important to make sure that your vehicle is adequately maintained and serviced and that brakes, tyres, lights, batteries, windscreens and wiper blades are in good condition and that engine coolant levels are topped up and contain anti-freeze.

In addition, washer bottles need to be topped up with an adequate screen wash to clear windscreens of dirt, grease and frost and ice - when it comes.

The consequences of not preparing your vehicle adequately or modifying your driving habits could be very serious. It could result in the loss of a life, possibly yours.

So motorists are reminded: 'Don't Risk It!'. Make sure that both you and your vehicle are prepared for Scotland's roads this winter.

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For further localised information; contact:
Your local Police Force Communications or Press Office

A CHECKLIST FOR MAKING SURE YOU AND YOUR VEHICLE ARE READY FOR SCOTTISH ROADS THIS WINTER

Worn or incorrectly inflated tyres can make it more difficult to stop in the event of an emergency. They should be inflated to the manufacturer's specification as found in the vehicle handbook.

Stopping distances are greatly increased when the roads are wet or icy, so drivers should check tyres to make sure:

- **they have more than the legal minimum of tread depth (1.6 mm);**
- **there are no bulges, cuts or tears (which can lead to a collision);**

and:

- **should increase the distance from the vehicle in front;**
- **should anticipate changing road and traffic conditions and decelerate rather than relying solely on the brakes;**

Other things to remember when driving during these winter road conditions include:

- **that visibility may be reduced due to fog, rain, spray, hail and snow;**
(Bearing this in mind, stay back from the vehicle in front and ensure that you use dipped headlights in periods of reduced visibility. Fog lights can only be used when visibility is seriously reduced to less than 100 metres but must be switched off if visibility improves.)
- **that being seen by other drivers is very important;**
(The use of sidelights may be misleading to other road users, particularly at dusk or in poor light, when they may mistakenly believe your vehicle is further away than it is and, as a consequence, what may appear to be a safe manoeuvre to them may not be.)
- **that the windscreen is kept in good condition and free from any defects, particularly as a low sun makes it very difficult to see clearly and a dirty, greasy or damaged windscreen will amplify this problem;**
(If possible, keep a pair of sunglasses in the vehicle and make sure they are readily available. Try and anticipate the problem of a low sun as this problem can be blinding.)
- **that wiper blades are not worn and are capable of clearing the screen correctly.**
(All windows, including the windscreen, should be demisted and cleared of any frost, snow or ice before moving off as failure to do so can have catastrophic consequences in the event of a collision. This may appear obvious but many drivers fail to clear all the windows prior to driving.)

Cyclists should ensure that they have suitable lights on their bicycles and that they wear reflective and fluorescent clothing and a cycle helmet. Parents of children, such as those who do paper rounds, should ensure that their children are given this protection, particularly as paper rounds are almost always carried out during the hours of darkness at this time of year.

Pedestrians should ensure that they wear bright coloured clothing, particularly in rural areas where the street lighting is either non-existent or very limited. Numerous articles of clothing and bags carried by schoolchildren these days contain reflective and fluorescent material and enable children to be seen from distance.

These measures are simple common sense and are easily achieved but are all too often overlooked yet only take a few seconds to carry out and will help all road users to avoid some of the dangers that this time of year can bring.

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