Driving in Bad Weather

PREPAREDNESS

It is best to not drive during inclement weather. However, if you must drive, make sure your vehicle is operating safely and stay informed on weather conditions.

Rain:

- ☐ Improve visibility, turn on your lights and defroster. NJ law requires your headlights to be on when your wipers are on.
- ☐ Avoid sudden moves, try to drive in the tracks of the car ahead, reduce your speed, allow for additional stopping distance.
- ☐ Hydroplaning occurs when the tires of your car lose contact with the road and ride up on a wedge of water. Make sure your tires have proper treads and are properly inflated. If you do hydroplane, keep the steering wheel straight, take your foot off the gas. Don't hit your brakes or try to steer. As you slow, the weight of the car will cause it to settle down onto the road again.
- ☐ Be very cautious in light rain or mist. Oil and dirt on the roadway surface make driving extra slippery.
- ☐ Remember, puddles can hide potentially damaging potholes.

Inclement weather . . .

May change the road conditions, contribute to collisions and other road obstructions.

Always follow directions of police officers and be alert for barricades, warnings, and debris.

Floods:

- ☐ Do not attempt to drive through flood waters. The water may be deeper than it looks. Two (2) feet of water will carry away most automobiles.
- ☐ If you happen to drive into an area where water is running swiftly, the force of the current may pull your car to one side. If this happens ease off the gas pedal, but don't touch the brakes. Then steer away from the swift water.
- ☐ If your car is caught in a flash flood, get out of your car immediately and move to higher ground.

Winter storms:

- ☐ Before driving, thoroughly clean ice and snow off all windows, the hood and the trunk.
- ☐ Utilize snow tires and chains if necessary.
- ☐ Drive slowly. Depending on the weight of your vehicle, you will need three (3) to twelve (12) times more stopping distance on icy roads than on dry surfaces.
- ☐ Ease off the accelerator when stopping.
- ☐ Remember, bridges and overpasses usually freeze first, slow down when approaching them. If caught in a blizzard, stay in your car. Leave a window partially open. Clear the snow away from your tailpipe. Run the engine & heater for about 10 minutes every hour to stay warm.

Being prepared includes . . .

- ☐ Listening to the radio for road closures and conditions.
- ☐ Always knowing alternate routes to your destination in case your primary route is blocked.

Fog:

- ☐ If you see a patch of fog ahead, slow down before you reach it.
- ☐ Turn on your low beam headlights or fog lights.
- ☐ Turn on your defroster and windshield wipers.
- ☐ Be alert for slow moving vehicles and traffic stopped ahead.
- ☐ In heavy fog, roll all your windows down. You may actually hear other cars before you see them.

Tornadoes:

- ☐ Never try to outrun a tornado.
- ☐ If you believe a tornado is very close, leave your car. If you can't find shelter in a safe building, lie flat in the nearest depression such as a ditch or gully with your arms over your head.

Hurricanes:

- ☐ If a hurricane watch is issued for your area, pack your car with essentials and fill your gas tank.
- ☐ You may be ordered to evacuate. Listen to the radio for instructions. Be familiar with designated evacuation routes and use them.
- ☐ Flooding can happen without warning both before and after a hurricane.
- ☐ Watch for downed utility lines, trees, and debris from hurricane force winds.

Thunderstorms:

- ☐ It is safest to stay in your car when lightning is present. If you have to park, do so in an open area away from trees.
- ☐ Watch for flooded roadways.
- ☐ If you are driving after a thunderstorm, be vigilant for downed branches and power lines or other debris lying in the road.
- ☐ Hail associated with thunderstorms can hamper visibility and may shatter windshields.

Remember

- ☐ It is safest to use a cellular phone when stopped in a safe location.
- ☐ 9-1-1 is for emergencies only.

Bergen County Office of Emergency Management
201-785-5757 or www.bcoem.org