



**This winter
ask yourself:
“What if...?”**

Drive

Safe

**Winter
Driving
Guide**

What if...

...your journey is suddenly disrupted?

As part of our Drive Safe programme, this Winter Driving Guide kicks off our new focus on 'Safe Vehicle' – the steps that keep any vehicle safe, roadworthy and ready for every journey.

A few small checks can make all the difference.

- Check the weather, warnings and traffic, and plan extra time.
- Travel on main roads if possible, or the safest roads as advised by your sat nav, and share your journey plan and ETA with someone.
- If conditions are worsening, consider whether it is safer to continue or turn back and postpone your journey.
- Don't drive tired – Sleepiness is Serious.
- Make sure your phone is charged.

If you do break down, staying calm and visible keeps you safe.

- If you leave the vehicle, stand well away from traffic.
- On motorways, pull far left, turn wheels to the verge, exit via the left-hand door and wait safely away from traffic.
- Report Close Calls to help prevent future incidents.
- Road Fleet Helpline: **0845 600 6767**.



Winter breakdown incidents on major roads have increased by 22% over five years¹.

1. Source: National Highways – [Winter Breakdown Trends](#)

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What if...

...you need to stop fast in wet or icy conditions?

Tyres with worn tread can add up to 10–12 metres to your stopping distance in wet conditions, and as a general rule, the colder the temperature, the longer your stopping distance will be².

Your tyre condition is critical – they're the only thing keeping you connected to the road.

- Tread depth of at least 3mm ensures best grip.
- Cuts, bulges or damage increase the risk of blowout and losing control of the vehicle.
- Cold weather lowers tyre pressure, so plan to check and top up more.

And remember: stopping distances increase sharply in winter.

- Stay at least 8 seconds behind the vehicle ahead of you. If you're not used to winter driving, stay 10 seconds behind.
- Brake earlier and more gently.
- Know your vehicle and how to use its features (like ABS brakes) best to keep you safe.
- Minimise in-cab distractions to help you focus on reading the road.

2. Source: TyreSafe – [Tyre Testing Results](#)



A thorough tyre check during your first use walkaround can prevent a slide, skid, or even a collision. 

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What if...



...there's a hidden problem with your vehicle?

UK breakdown providers expect around 472,000 car battery failures between November and January – a huge spike caused by cold weather³.

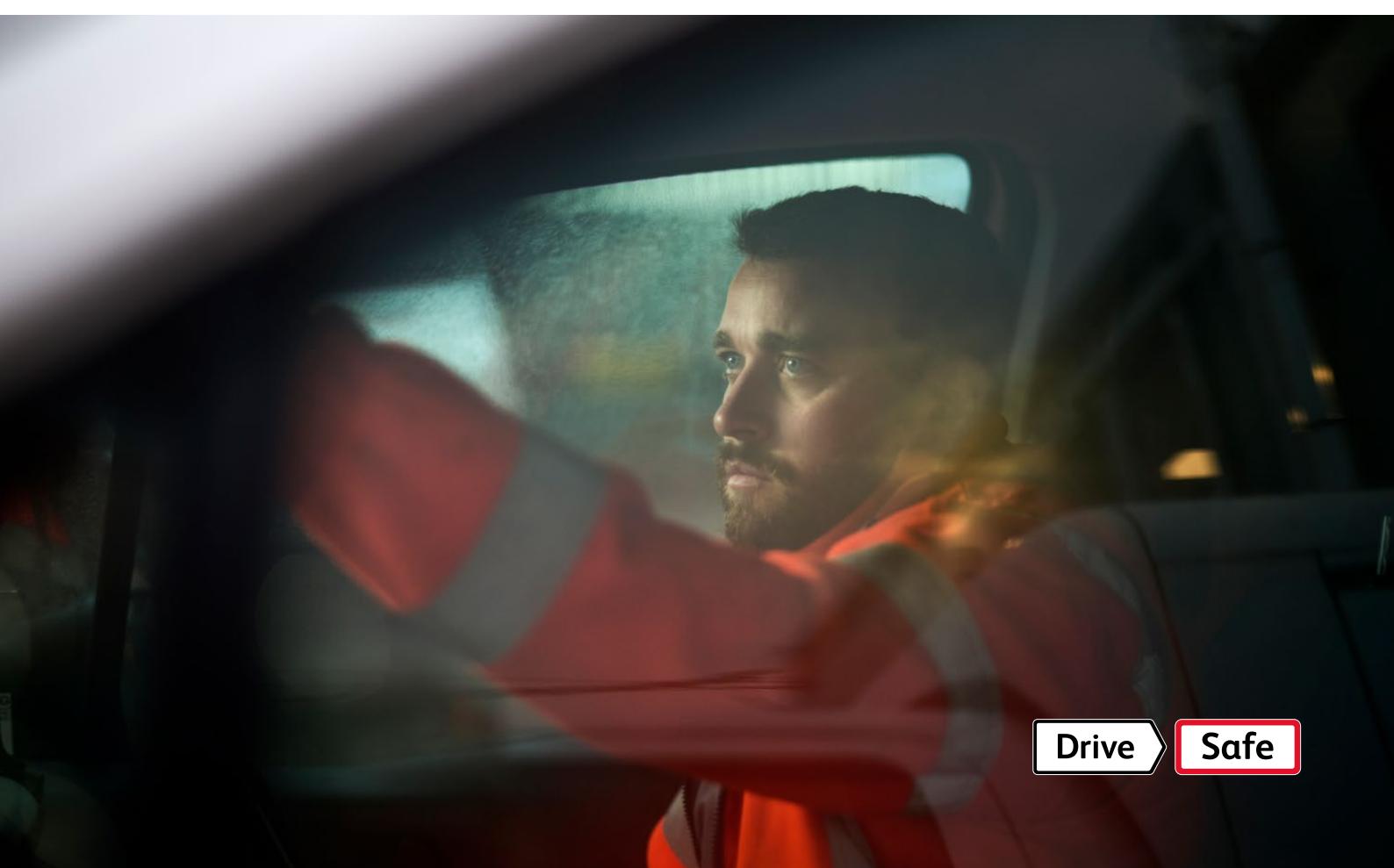
When driving a Network Rail vehicle, always carry out your Vehicle First Use Walkaround Checks using the CheckedSafe app. Take the time to complete it properly and report any faults, and do not drive a vehicle if it is not safe to do so. See p.10 of the Driver's Handbook.

These essential vehicle checks can keep you safe this winter, so why not bring safety home?

When you go from a company vehicle to your personal one, remember to:

- test your battery, ignition and lights
- check your brakes
- make sure your wipers work properly and blades aren't damaged
- top up all fluids: screenwash, coolant, oil, brake fluid
- keep your fuel tank topped up, especially on longer trips.

3. Source: fleetnews.co.uk



Drive

Safe

What if...

...you're stranded in the freezing cold?

Only one in seven drivers carries an emergency winter kit⁴ – how well equipped are you?

Pack these essentials to stay safe and visible – and keep them in the vehicle, not at home.

- Ice scraper and de-icer.
- Sturdy walking shoes.
- Blanket.
- Bottled water.
- Salt or grit.
- Hi-vis jacket.
- Shovel.

This simple winter kit can prevent a winter breakdown turning into a life-threatening situation.

4. Source: [Go.Compare Car Insurance research \(Nov 2025\)](#)



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Safe

What if...

...you're driving an electric vehicle this winter?

Cold weather can cut EV range by up to 40%⁵ – so it's important to adapt to conditions and plan ahead.

Key winter EV habits to adopt.

- Pre-condition your vehicle while it's still plugged in (warm the cabin and battery).
- Check tyre pressure and condition – under-inflated tyres and cold temperatures mean greater energy loss and longer stopping distances.

- Drive smoothly: accelerate gently and allow extra distance for braking.
- Plan charging stops if you're on a longer journey – lower winter range reduces room for error.

5. Source: [Fleet News – “How tyre size and cold weather impacts EV range” \(Oct 2025\)](#)



Drive 

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What if...

...you can't see the hazards ahead?

Always ensure you have good visibility of the road ahead and drive smoothly and steadily in poor weather conditions.

- Clear all windows and mirrors before setting off.
- Make sure all lights are clean and working.
- Use dipped headlights in rain, snow or low light.
- Only use fog lights when visibility is under 100 metres.
- Brake before corners, not during.
- Use a higher gear than usual to maintain control.
- Don't forget your sunglasses to manage the dazzling winter sun.

6. Source: [Department for Transport \(DfT\)](#)

When your vision drops, your caution should rise. 



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**All the basics – and more
– are covered in our
Driver Handbook**



Please stay updated on driver safety by regularly checking our [Driver Handbook](#) and by visiting the [Drive Safe](#) section on [safety.networkrail.co.uk](#).

If you need further help or would like to support our Drive Safe programme, speak to your line manager who can connect you with your local **Road Vehicle Compliance Manager (RVCM)** or the **Road Fleet Team**.

You can also find some excellent resources on driver safety from our partners at **Driving For Better Business** [drivingforbetterbusiness.com](#)

Thank you for reading this guide. Don't forget to ask yourself and your team, "What If?".