

Spring driving safety tips

According to the Federal Highway Administration, rain contributed to 46 percent of all weather-related crashes between 2005 to 2014, and wet pavement in general accounted for 73 percent. With this in mind, professional school transportation staff need to focus on new safety and awareness tips.

Vehicle preparedness:

- Replace your wiper blades. Worn-out wiper blades may not be up to the task of clearing water away from your windshield.
- Check your tire pressure, extremely cold winter weather can result in air pressure loss.
- Make certain that tire tread is sufficient to maintain wet pavement traction.

Driving preparedness:

- Slow down, drive carefully and increase your stopping distance when it's raining.
- Don't underestimate the depth of water on the roadway. If you cannot see the pavement, do not attempt to drive through the water. One foot of water will make some vehicles float. Two feet of water can sweep vehicles away, including SUVs and pickups. Even more dangerous is the fact that flooding conditions can undermine the roadbed and sweep portions of the pavement away.
- Watch for bad road conditions. Winter weather produces potholes and other driving obstacles and remember puddles can hide potholes.
- Watch out for animals. Be vigilant during the early morning and evening when animals are most active.
- Be alert for hydroplaning (when tires lose contact with the road), which will cause your vehicle to feel like it is floating on water. If this occurs, remove pressure from the accelerator, avoid turning the wheel, and gradually slow down. To avoid hydroplaning, slow down, turn off cruise control, and avoid sudden braking and turns.
- Spring brings bicycle riders out of hibernation. Cyclists in the roadway can make traffic maneuvers, such as right-hand turns more difficult and dangerous.
- Beware of reduced stopping ability when pavement is wet or has standing water. Not only your bus is impacted, but anticipate other traffic being unable to stop for student pick-ups or drop-offs.
- Rain on mirrors can reduce image quality, and rain gear can reduce students' ability to see, so use extra caution at bus stops. Remember safety is the priority-the schedule is not.

Weather awareness:

- Beware of hailstorms. Even small hailstones can crack windshields.
- Anticipate wind gusts and be extra cautious when driving through wind-prone areas such as overpasses, and bridges. Be especially cautious when driving out of sheltered areas and into roadways where you encounter the full force of the wind.
- Be alert for changing weather conditions. Look for approaching storms. Watch for the following danger signs:
 - Dark, often greenish sky
 - Large hail
 - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly, if rotating)
 - Loud roar, similar to a freight train
 - If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately and notify your dispatcher of your location.