

## PREVENTING SKIDS & HYDROPLANING

Losing control of one's car is a frightening experience. Skids are scary, and hydroplaning is completely nerve-wracking.

### SKIDDING

Skids are defined as the loss of traction between a vehicle's tires and the road surface due to the forces acting on a vehicle. Three factors lead to lost traction and skidding: road factors, mechanical factors and the human factor.

**Road factors** such as water, ice, snow, oil, loose gravel, sand or leaves all interfere with vehicle traction. It is important to be aware of road conditions and to practice caution when driving at all times.

**Mechanical factors** include tire wear, improper tire inflation, wheel alignment and faulty suspension. Loss of tread or changes in the shape of a tire due to improper inflation reduces traction. Improper alignment may cause a car to swerve making steering difficult. Driving with a broken suspension system will compromise vehicle handling, and an automobile will likely bounce, causing it to skid and shake with even the slightest irregularity in the road.

**Human factors** include excessive speed, sudden braking and over steering. These factors are usually a last minute action by a driver when faced with an obstacle or crisis ahead, increasing the chance of an accident.

### Preventing Skids

- Driving slowly and carefully, especially when approaching a curve. Adjust speed according to the road conditions.
- Increase following distance in poor driving conditions.
- Steer carefully.
- When stopping or slowing, do not brake hard or lock the wheels, as this can cause a skid. Maintain mild pressure on the brake pedal.

### You're Skidding...Now What?

- Remain calm,
- Ease your foot off the gas and carefully steer in the direction you want the front of your car to go. Do not over-correct (turning abruptly) as this will make the skid more severe.
- Do not use the brake as they can lock up causing your tires to lose more traction.
- Slowly straighten the wheels.

### HYDROPLANING

Hydroplaning occurs when the water in front of a vehicle's tires builds up faster than the car's weight can push it out of the way. The water pressure causes the car to rise up and slide on a thin layer of water between the tires and the road. Like skidding, the driver loses the ability to steer. The steering wheel will jerk and the vehicle will pull.

### Preventing Hydroplaning

- Make sure tires are properly inflated and have good tread.
- Drive slower when the roads are wet.
- Avoid puddles.
- Try to drive in tire tracks left by cars ahead.
- Use caution when turning. Making a turn too sharp can cause the car to hydroplane.
- Brake lightly. Slamming on brakes will cause them to lock up and the car will lose traction.

### What to Do When You Hydroplane

- Stay calm
- Ease off the gas until the car slows
- Do not brake or turn abruptly, as this can cause a skid.
- If you do need to brake, do it gently with a pumping action. If you have anti-lock brakes, brake normally.
- Slowly straighten the wheels.



Proper defensive driving methods are the best tools in preventing a vehicle from skidding or hydroplaning. It is important to drive safe by following speed limits and being aware of surrounding conditions in order to avoid accidents.