

Bad-Weather Driving: Decide Before You Go

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Why this matters

Clear conditions at the yard do not prove the route is clear. Weather, visibility and traction can change during the trip. Make the departure decision with current information and agree how the driver can delay or stop safely.

Objective: Verify the route decision, vehicle readiness and response to deteriorating conditions.

Key hazards or failure points

Stale forecasts; poor visibility or traction; failed wipers or defroster; flooded or closed roads; inadequate supplies; fatigue; pressure to keep the original arrival time.

Practical controls

- Check official forecasts and road information for the route and destination. Change timing, route or nonessential travel when conditions warrant. Share the trip and expected arrival arrangements.
- Prepare the vehicle using its actual instructions and applicable inspection requirements. Check tires, lights, wipers, washer and defroster, with supplies and communication suited to the trip.
- Drive for conditions, reduce speed and increase space when needed. Discontinue travel when it cannot be done safely. Never drive through flooded or closed roads. Agree safe waiting options and a way to report delays while stopped.

Verify It in the Field

Driver and dispatcher review the timestamp and location of weather and road information. Record the departure, change or delay decision and what will trigger another review. Do not rely only on conditions outside the office.

With the vehicle safely parked, check lights from safe positions and operate visibility equipment as instructed. Check tires against the correct vehicle placard, manual and applicable criteria. Resolve failures; do not test traction with a skid or public-road braking challenge.

Confirm charged communications, trip supplies and practical safe stopping options. The dispatcher acknowledges that delay may be necessary. Record readiness findings and the contact method. Do not require an abrupt stop in a live traffic lane to follow the plan.

Stop and reassess

Change or discontinue the trip when visibility, traction or vehicle condition no longer supports safe driving. Reassess closures, floodwater, new warnings, fatigue or route changes from a safe location. Get help when needed; do not try to recover delay by speeding.

Ask the crew

1. What evidence supports leaving now?
2. Where could we wait safely if conditions change?
3. Who will support a delay rather than pressure the driver?

Before departure: verify conditions, readiness and the option to wait.

Sources: NHTSA winter/severe-weather guidance; 49 CFR 392.14 for covered commercial vehicles.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.