

Driving in strong winds

Sudden gusts can catch out even the most experienced driver



Expect sudden gusts at any time

Wind rarely blows steadily, and sudden gusts can catch you out no matter how experienced a driver you are.

Expect sudden gusts at any time but particularly on open stretches of road, when passing bridges or gaps in hedges or when overtaking high-sided vehicles.

Whether it's strong winds, snow, floods or fog, if extreme weather is forecast it is always best to avoid travelling unless your journey is absolutely necessary.

There are three potential problems to be aware of if you're driving in high winds

You can be blown off course

Keep both hands on the wheel, particularly if you're being buffeted by the wind or the slipstreams of other vehicles and anticipate stronger winds and gusts on exposed stretches of road or when passing high-sided vehicles.

It's important to keep your speed down too. The faster you're travelling the further off-course you're likely to drift in a sudden gust before you get the vehicle back under control.

Other vehicles can be blown into your path

High-sided vehicles and caravans are most affected by high winds but sudden gusts can blow any vehicle off course. Keep your distance from all other vehicles and take particular care around cyclists, motorcyclists and horse-riders.

If you break down on the motorway or on any busy road in gusty weather it's important to bear in mind that lorries and other high-sided vehicles could be blown off course suddenly and may veer onto the hard

shoulder. It's safer to move to a safe location away from the vehicle rather than wait in the car to be rescued.

There could be trees or other debris in the road

Inevitably, some trees or branches will come down when winds are high. If you see twigs or small branches in the road there could easily be a tree or large branch in the road around the next bend. Hitting debris like this at speed could be fatal so it's important to keep your speed down and drive with great care particularly on country roads early in the morning.

Trees can partially fall too and hang above the road, sometimes above the sweep of the headlights making them very difficult to spot.

If you do have to drive

In case of an emergency, always carry a fully-charged mobile phone and warm, weatherproof clothing.

Plan journeys carefully and check both weather and traffic bulletins regularly – low speed limits or even temporary closures may be imposed on exposed bridges and road closures due to falling debris or accidents will be more frequent.