**Driving in Windy Conditions**

Winter in the UK sees the windiest weather as the Gulf Stream moves further south and results in storms hitting the UK. The North and the West are the windiest areas. In the list of top 10 windiest locations in the UK, all are in Scotland apart from Gwynedd and the Isle of Wight.

Only undertake journeys in high winds if they are absolutely necessary. If you do set off and the wind speeds increase, it’s best to call ahead to notify your destination and stop somewhere safe. You’ll need to plan ahead and consider your route and whether there are particular features that will expose your vehicles to strong gusts, these could include bridges, overpasses or road cuttings that could funnel wind.

High winds often come with heavy rain so check your vehicle to ensure that the tyres and wipers are in good condition.

If you’re in the freight industry and you hear a forecast for windy weather, look for alert messages from Highways England. An amber alert means take care but a red alert means you shouldn’t be driving.

**High Risk Vehicles**

If you drive one of the following vehicles you should take particular care and refrain from using bridges and overpasses:

Abnormal loads

High sided rigid heavy goods vehicle

Articulated heavy goods vehicle

Double decker buses

Car transporters

Rigid and articulated tippers

Luton vans

Vehicles with trailers

Load security should always receive a particular focus but in windy conditions, load security measures will need to be even more robust. Curtain sided vehicles which have not load should have the curtains tied back to prevent them acting like a sail.

**Tips for driving in windy conditions**

* Slow down, you’ll have more time to anticipate gusts of wind and they will have less effect on your vehicle. You’ll also have more chance to react to debris in the road.
* Keep both hands on the wheel and grip it firmly but not so rigid that you cannot react to sudden gusts.
* Think about your route and look at the surroundings ahead of you. Exposed sections of road and bridges will see the highest windspeeds and trees and buildings will shelter your vehicle.
* Beware of wind gusts blowing between tall buildings.
* Look out for fallen trees and branches as you follow a bend in the road.
* Observe the traffic ahead closely and look for signs of high wind in the movements of vehicles ahead. This will help you anticipate gusts.
* Plan your journey time to allow for bridge closures and significant detours. Ideally plan your route to avoid bridges.
* Watch out for standing water and slow down to avoid aquaplaning.
* If a tail wind is speeding up your vehicle, beware of braking as it can cause the vehicle to spin.
* If you’re driving past a high sided vehicle, be prepared for a sudden gust of wind as you pass the vehicle, refraining from overtaking will be a much safer option.
* Give all road users more room to account for the eventuality of them being blown off course, this could apply to a high sided vehicle down to a cyclist.
* Avoid towing trailers in windy conditions.
* Park your vehicle in a location that is not too close to objects that could be blown onto your vehicle. This could include avoiding parking near large trees, large signs, fence panels etc.

# Key Points to Remember

The risks associated with driving in windy conditions can catch us all by surprise, the handling of vehicles with even a low centre of gravity can be affected. These conditions can occur anywhere in the country but more commonly in the North and West. Key points to remember include:

* When windy weather is forecast, be sure to check for Highways England weather alerts. Be prepared not to travel.
* If you have a high risk vehicle, check your route for bridges and be prepared to take an alternate route.
* Read the road ahead and be prepared for gusts of wind between buildings.
* Slow your speed, the wind will have less effect on the steering of the vehicle and you’ll have more time to react to debris on the road and to vehicles that are being blown off course.

# Driver’s discussion questions

1. Are there regular routes that are open and include overpasses where wind speeds can be high?
2. Which organisation issues weather alerts when high winds are expected?
3. What should you do if you have an empty curtain sider vehicle in windy conditions?

Comments

Date:

Meeting conducted by:

# Attendees

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