

‘DRIVING SAFELY, IN AUTUMN’

September 2025

Autumn brings seasonal and often unexpected driving hazards. With planning and preparation these can be made much less of a risk.

This information is drawn from the content of our community webinars. These take place at 10:00 on the last Saturday of the month, and last for one hour.

If you wish to be added to our database to receive information on future events, please email odfglos@gmail.com

There are three main elements to any driving scenario which we can influence: driving ability, vehicle preparedness, and journey planning.

1. DRIVING ABILITY

Nearly 90% of collisions are due to human error.

So, the first step in being autumn driving fit is to check with our health professionals that **there are no health issues that impact our driving ability** or any conditions that need to be reported to the DVLA and insurance company.

- ✓ **Eyesight.** Autumn driving can involve driving in low sunlight and low light conditions. By our 70's we may require 32 times more light to see effectively than we did at the age of 25. We can also have a reduced field of vision with a loss of 20 to 30 degrees of peripheral vision. Regular eyesight tests, at least every two years, are essential. If glasses are required, check with your optometrist if these must be worn for driving. If so, ask for the glasses to be treated with an anti-reflective coating which reduces sunlight and headlamp glare. If you wear sunglasses these must also have prescription lenses. Keep a spare pair of glasses in your car.
- ✓ **Reactions.** By 65 our reactions can be 22 times slower than a 30-year-old. On wet roads allow at least double the stopping distance than in the dry. Never drive faster than you can see and have time to react to a hazard. Quick reactions also require good movement of our neck, hands and feet. Ensure you have a suitable exercise regime to maintain flexibility.

- ✓ **Medications.** Autumn is the start of the cold and flu season. Check with the pharmacist whether any medications can make you feel drowsy and ask for a non-drowsy option. Further checks need to be made if there is a change in dosage, or a new prescription is given with a potential negative interaction with an existing medication. Don't forget to mention any herbal supplements you may be taking. If prescribed a new medication, consider making alternative transport arrangements until you discover the effect the medicine has on you. Never take a friend's prescribed medication.
- ✓ **Share the driving.** Keep driving regularly and, if a couple, share the driving so you both maintain driving skills.
- ✓ **Highway Code.** Make sure to keep up to date with the latest changes. The Code can be downloaded free-of-charge. www.highwaycodeuk.co.uk
- ✓ **Mature driver reviews.** To refresh driving skills, take a confidence-building IAM RoadSmart review. If you are over 65, are resident in Gloucestershire and wish to take up our offer of a free review and be part of a national trial, email odfglos@gmail.com giving the year of your birth and postcode. If you have cognitive or mobility issues, then an assessment should take place at a DVLA accredited Driving Mobility centre www.drivingmobility.org.uk
- ✓ **Advanced driver course.** This is open to mature drivers who have completed the review. The course involves 6 to 12 one-to-one sessions with a qualified observer and normally take 3 to 6 months to complete. This leads to a test with an IAM RoadSmart examiner. The course costs £204, however, on completion of the course the Gloucestershire Advanced Motorists will offer a full refund to Gloucestershire residents. This offer has limited numbers so email asco@glosiam.org.uk as soon as possible to register your interest.

2. VEHICLE PREPAREDNESS

The Office of National Statistics report mature drivers' vehicles are driven on average 32 miles a week,
with the risks that regular maintenance checks are overlooked.

- ✓ **Battery health.** Get your garage to check your battery condition. Autumn driving places higher demands on the battery with the extra-use of lights, heater, and wipers. If the vehicle is only driven short distances, then it needs to be in good condition to hold its charge. Breakdown services report battery failure is the number one reason for callouts.
- ✓ **Lights operation.** Check all the lights are working and are properly adjusted, not forgetting the front and rear fog lights.
- ✓ **Tyre condition.** Check tyre pressures at least every two weeks and are at the manufacturers recommended settings. Also check the tyres have sufficient tread. In the wet at 50mph a tyre with 1.6mm of tread, the legal limit, takes 25% longer to stop than tyres with 3mm of tread. We recommend replacing tyres at 3mm.

- ✓ **Wiper blades wear.** With heavy downpours wipers work extra-hard, so check the wipers clear the screen without smears. If they must be replaced then invest in a premium brand, which consistently come out top in comparative tests.
- ✓ **Fluids level.** Check the windscreen fluid is topped up, and with the correct rating for sub-zero temperatures. RAC recommend a pre-mix, effective down to -15C.
- ✓ **Misting up prevention.** Do not leave damp items in the car. Clean the inside of all glass areas. Place a silica de-humidifier bag on the dashboard.
- ✓ **Leaf check.** Regularly open your bonnet and check that leaves are not blocking air inlets beneath the wiper blades.
- ✓ **Essential equipment.** Should include insurance and breakdown service documents in the glove compartment and telephone number stored in your mobile. Also, a warm blanket, mobile phone charger, torch, warning triangle, and high visibility bibs for driver and passengers. Keep a pair of dry shoes in the car so wet feet don't slip on the pedals. Also have an emergency car glass hammer or spring-loaded window punch to break a window if you get stuck in the car after a collision or in a flood.
- ✓ **Smart phone app.** If you have a smartphone download the What3Words app. <https://whats3words.com> This identifies your location by three words which can be given to the emergency or recovery services. This is particularly helpful on roads with few obvious landmarks.
- ✓ **Sunflower Scheme.** If you have a hidden disability, wear a Sunflower scheme lanyard, and have a sticker on your car. This will alert the emergency services that you may need a little more support. www.hiddendisabilitiesstore.com
- ✓ **Emergency information.** Have a Lions Club 'message in a bottle' with personal and medical details in the glove compartment to assist emergency services. These are available free of charge at doctors' surgeries and pharmacies.
- ✓ **Car accessories.** Panoramic clip-on review mirrors and blind spot mirrors that can be attached to the car's wing mirrors can help mitigate restricted peripheral vision.

3. JOURNEY PLANNING

With lower temperatures and damp conditions
the interior of a car can mist up.

With your first morning trip **allow an extra 10 minutes** to allow time to
ensure you have 360-degree visibility.

- ✓ **Safe routes.** Use online map services and www.crashmap.co.uk to plan your route to minimise more demanding roads and avoid crash hotspots. Minimise routes with difficult junctions. One of the most frequent settings for mature driver collisions is turning right at T-junctions.

- ✓ **Safe times.** Avoid rush hours - statistically high-risk times for car crashes. Also, if you live near a school, school run times.
- ✓ **Safe light conditions.** Minimise driving into low sun.
- ✓ **Weather reports.** Download the Met office app to receive weather warnings. <https://weather.metoffice.gov.uk> If there is a warning of fog or heavy rain no journey is worth the risk.
- ✓ **Sudden severe weather.** If you encounter a sudden heavy downpour that reduces visibility, when it is safe to do so pull over in a safe place until the storm passes.
- ✓ **Windy weather.** Give extra room to cyclists, motorcyclists and high-sided vehicles in case they get blown off course.
- ✓ **Floods.** If you come across a flooded road turn around and find an alternative route.
- ✓ **Journey alert.** Let someone know if you are going on a longer or unusual journey. Download the 'Find my Friends' app, <https://find-myfriends.com> which is an easy way for them to track your progress.

Driving Safely in Autumn Requires

PREPARATION – PREPARATION – PREPARATION

FINAL THOUGHT

Mature drivers have a wealth of driving experience, which can be of great value to all the family. As you refresh your driving skills and knowledge draw your family into that process and help normalise family conversations around road safety.

It is only if everyone in the community heightens their awareness and sense of responsibility around road safety can we make our roads safer.

These notes are produced by the Older Drivers Forum for Gloucestershire. We are a voluntary organisation who operate under the charitable status of Gloucestershire Older Persons Associations (Charity number 1124977)

**To donate to support our work please email odfglos@gmail.com for details.
Thank you.**