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TIP OF THE WEEK

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DRIVING IN THE RAIN

Our dark and rainy season has arrived. For some people, driving in the rain, especially in the dark, is anxiety-producing. According to the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#), there are an average of more than 950,000 automobile crashes each year due to wet pavement which results in approximately 4,700 deaths and 384,000 injuries.

But being behind the wheel and a rain-covered windshield doesn't have to be a nerve-racking experience. Here are some tips for driving in a downpour:

1. **Think.** We are all guilty of driving out of habit. So as a reminder, when it rains, we often need to adjust our thinking. When conditions are less than ideal, drivers need to stay alert and focused on what's going on around them.
2. **Turn on those headlights.** It's the law in all states to turn on headlights when visibility is low and many states also require having the headlights on when the windshield wipers are in use. Note: Oregon does not require motorists to turn on headlights when wipers are used. Well-working wipers and relatively new (not threadbare) tires are also must-haves when driving in rain.
3. **Beware of hydroplaning.** That's what occurs when your tires are getting more traction on the layer of water on the road than on the road itself—the result is that your car begins to slide uncontrollably. It's easy enough to hydroplane: All you need is one-twelfth of an inch of rain on the road and a speed of more than 35 miles per hour. If you start to hydroplane, let off the accelerator slowly and steer straight until you regain control.

4. **Turn off cruise control.** Ironically, on rain- or snow- slick surfaces, cruise control may cause you to lose control. You might think it'll help you stay at one steady speed, but if you hydroplane while you're in cruise control, your car will actually go faster.

5. **Slow down.** Speed limit signs are designed for ideal conditions. That means driving when you have little traffic and good visibility. That's hardly the environment you're driving in when it's raining, so let up on the accelerator and allow more time to get to your destination.

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