

PREVENTING SKIDS AND HYDROPLANING

Skidding or hydroplaning can be a terrifying experience. Skids can happen anytime or anywhere, on wet or dry roads, and are often the result of the driver's failure to react to hazards in time, or excessive speed relative to road conditions. As a result, sudden steering, braking or accelerating actions can cause the vehicle to skid.

Skids

Three factors lead to lost traction and skidding: road factors, mechanical factors and the human factor.

- ▶ Road factors, such as water, ice, snow, oil, loose gravel, sand or leaves can all interfere with vehicle traction. Drivers expect that the vehicle's weight will press the tires against the road, but any of these factors can prevent that from happening and can cause the vehicle to skid or hydroplane.
- ▶ Mechanical factors include tire wear, improper tire inflation, wheel alignment and faulty suspension. Loss of tread depth or changes in the shape of your tire due to improper inflation can also reduce traction. Improper alignment can misdirect the tire's angle on the road. Problems with shock absorption can allow the tires to bounce and also reduce traction.
- ▶ Human factors include excessive speed, over-acceleration, over-braking and over-steering.

Preventing Skids

It is possible to prevent skids from happening by:

- ▶ Driving slowly and carefully. Adjust your speed to the road conditions.
- ▶ Give yourself a greater following distance for extra space.
- ▶ Steer and brake with a light touch.
- ▶ When stopping or slowing, do not brake hard or lock the wheels, as this may cause a skid. Maintain mild pressure on the brake pedal.
- ▶ Follow the rules of safe driving, such as changing speed smoothly, avoiding tailgating and accelerating abruptly.

What to do in a Skid

If you still start skidding after following these precautionary measures, stay calm and follow the tips below to attempt getting out of the skid.

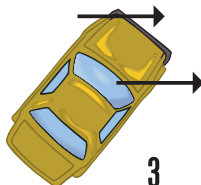
- ▶ Ease your foot off the gas and allow the engine to slow down the vehicle.
- ▶ Do not use the brake, as your tires must be turning in order to regain traction. Hitting the brakes may make the skid worse!
- ▶ Carefully steer in the direction you want the front of the car to go. Turning abruptly can make the skid worse!
- ▶ Slowly straighten the wheels and keep rolling.



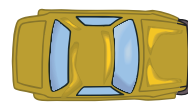
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1. Before Skid
2. Rear Wheels Slide to Right
3. Turn Front Wheels to Right
4. Vehicle Straight Again

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PREVENTING SKIDS AND HYDROPLANING

Hydroplaning

Hydroplaning occurs when the front wheels of a vehicle rise off the road surface and ride on a 'wedge' of water. The pressure from the water causes your car to rise up and slide on the water between your tires and the road. Like skidding, the driver loses the ability to steer when hydroplaning. The steering wheel may jerk and the vehicle may pull abruptly. The best way to stop hydroplaning is to reduce your speed by easing off of the accelerator.

Preventing Hydroplaning

It is possible to prevent hydroplanes from happening by:

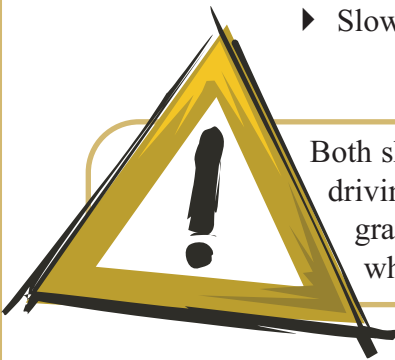
- ▶ Keeping tires in good condition! This means making sure they are properly inflated and have good tread.
- ▶ Slowing down when roads are wet!
- ▶ Avoiding puddles and driving in the middle of tracks left by other cars, as they have already displaced some of the water.



What to do in a Hydroplane

If you start to hydroplane, stay calm and follow the tips below to attempt getting out of the hydroplane:

- ▶ Ease your foot off the gas. Allow the engine to slow down the vehicle.
- ▶ Do not use the brake or turn abruptly, as this can put you into a skid.
- ▶ If you need to brake, do it gently with a pumping action. If you have anti-lock brakes, then brake normally.
- ▶ Slowly straighten the wheels and keep rolling.



Both skidding and hydroplaning can be avoided by using reduced speeds and driving carefully, especially on turns, anticipating stops and slowing down gradually, steering and braking with a light touch. Hard braking or locking the wheels can cause a skid.

For additional information on vehicle safety or any other topic, contact your Risk Management Client Services Specialist at or visit our website at www.siegelagency.com. *Irwin Siegel Agency, Inc. accepts no legal responsibility for the correctness of this material or its application to specific factual situations. It cannot be assumed that every acceptable safety procedure is contained herein or that abnormal or unusual circumstances may not warrant or require further or additional procedures.*