

Feb. 28, 2011

Health & Safety Concerns – Driving Through Flooded Areas & High Water

Mansfield, OH — The Mansfield/Ontario/Richland County Health Department and the Richland County Safe Communities Coalition offer the following information about driving during heavy rains, through high water, and in flooded areas:

- Slow down early, before you encounter a problem, and be aware that you have less grip available from your tires - for stopping, steering and accelerating. Remember: Even four-wheel-drive and anti-lock brakes can't change the laws of physics.
- Even a new tire can begin to hydroplane on wet surfaces, so watch your speed. If the steering begins to feel light and the car is splashing through deep puddles, gently reduce your speed to allow the car to slow to a more manageable speed. Don't lift the gas peddle abruptly or hit the brakes, since this could unsettle the tires' grip on the wet surface.
- Never drive your car through deep water on a flooded road. You simply cannot tell how deep the water is. It doesn't take much water to disable your vehicle or even float it off of the road surface. If you have any doubt about water depth, stop and go back the way you came. If you must drive through deep puddles, gently press the brake pedal one or two times afterwards to help dry the brakes before you need to use them to stop the car.
- Use the speeds on your windshield wipers to help remove the amount of water that is hitting the windshield. This sounds simple, but some people forget that at higher road speeds you need the highest wiper speed.
- Be aware of the spray coming from passing trucks and oncoming cars. It may blind you temporarily, so anticipate this by turning on (or increasing the speed of) your wipers and by looking at what's happening to cars ahead of you.
- If it begins to rain very lightly after a long dry spell, the water will mix with the oils on the road to produce a very slippery surface. Treat these conditions with great caution since even new tires won't give much grip on this oil-and-water mixture.
- Turn down the radio and turn off your cell phone. Driving in heavy rain demands much more of your attention than driving on dry roads.
- If conditions become too intense, pull far off the road in a safe place to wait out the storm. If your car becomes disabled, pull as far off the road as possible, turn on your four-way flashers and call for help. Stay in your car.

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