



Autumn and Winter weather working guide

The winter months of November, December, and January see a spike in car accidents across the UK (CHAS, 2024).

Stopping distances in a car can be 10 times longer when it's icy.

REMEMBER

'FORCES':

***Fuel** – Don't risk running out of fuel.*

***Oil** – check it's at the right level to reduce the chances of overheating in traffic.*

***Rubber** – tyres need to be properly inflated and in good condition to give your car a safe, sure grip on the road.*

***Coolant** – this does a vital job in ensuring the engine runs at the right temperature.*

***Electrics** – ensure your car lights work.*

***Screenwash** – helps keep your windscreen clear.*

As the days shorten and weather conditions shift, there are new challenges for site work and travel. The Diggers' Forum has put together a practical **Autumn and Winter Weather Working Guide** to help you stay safe, efficient and prepared working in the field but also travelling to and from site.

Driving to and from Site: Reduced Light & Rural Hazards

- **Plan for darkness:** Early starts and late finishes mean more driving in the dark. Check headlights and keep a torch in your vehicle.
- **Watch for wildlife:** Dawn and dusk are peak times for deer, badgers and foxes crossing rural roads. Reduce speed and stay alert.
- **Fog & glare:** Low sun angles and misty mornings can reduce visibility. Keep windscreens clean and use dipped headlights.

Flooded and partly flooded roads

- If the road is **fully flooded**, **do not attempt to drive through**. Turn around and find an alternate route.
- If the road is **partially flooded**, drive through **very slowly** in **first gear** and **keep revs high** to avoid stalling. Test brakes after exiting the water.
- **Keep your manager informed** if road conditions delay your arrival - safety comes first.
- **Do not speed** to make up time. It's not worth the risk of an accident.

General Autumn/Winter Site Tips

- **Layer up:** Weather can shift quickly. Waterproofs, gloves and warm hats are essential. Thermal base layers can be a lifesaver.
- **Footwear:** Waterproof (safety) boots with good grip are a must. Keep a spare pair of socks in your bag.
- **Visibility:** Keep your hi-vis clean as mud splatters can lessen the hi-vis effect, especially in low light or near machinery.

Driving on Site: Wet Ground & Vehicle Safety

- **Off-road tyres:** Ensure your Hilux or 4x4 has proper off-road tyres fitted. Most lease companies will fit them at no extra cost.
- **4x4 training:** If available, your company can arrange for drivers to take a short off-road driving course (half a day to a day), it's invaluable for confidence and safety.
- **Stick to field edges:** Avoid the middle of fields where water collects. Drive along contours or hedgerows where ground is firmer.
- **Avoid getting stuck:** If in doubt, don't risk it. Use boards or mats if you must cross soft ground.

Did you know, large raindrops can fall as fast as 20 mph, while the smallest raindrops can take up to 7 minutes to fall?

In 2025 the winter solstice will occur on Sunday 21 December. This is seen as a time of celebration with many events taking place across the UK.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) affects around 2 million people in the UK. There are many groups, helplines and communities here to support those affected. You are not alone.

Weather Watch: Thunderstorms & Heavy Rain

- **Check forecasts daily:** Use apps like *Met Office* or *Windy* to monitor local conditions.
- **Lightning protocol:** If thunder is within 30 seconds of lightning, stop work, seek advice from senior site staff and find shelter (not under trees or in open fields).
- **Flood risk:** Be aware of low-lying areas that may become impassable. Know your site's drainage and escape routes.
- **Heavy rainfall:** The chance for slips, trips, falls, obscured vision and cold stress are all increased in heavy rainfall. Seek advice from senior site staff.

Others

- **Vehicle checklist:** Tyre pressure, lights, wipers and emergency kit.
- **Team comms:** Radios or phones fully charged. Share your ETA and location if working remotely (eg using What3Words).
- **Mental health:** Shorter days can affect mood. Check in with teammates and take breaks.

Physical and mental fatigue

Seasonal changes, including shorter daylight hours and cooler temperatures, can lead to physical and mental fatigue especially for people working outdoors. The causes of autumn fatigue vary including a disrupted circadian rhythm (which has to do with hormones and light change exposure), daylight saving time (clock change), lower vitamin D, psychological stress and cold stress.

What can we do at work to minimize these effects

- **Dress in layers.** Use disposable/reusable hand warmers or heated jackets.
- **Take frequent, warm breaks.** Make sure you keep hydrated with hot or cold drinks.
- **Plan filling meals.** This is the perfect time for heartier meals which provide you with energy and vitamins.
- **Consider buying things to support seasonal changes.** Items like sunrise alarm clocks, SAD lamps, diaries or journals, flasks for hot drinks and meal prep containers can all make a massive difference.
- **Schedule demanding tasks wisely.** Whenever possible, plan physically strenuous tasks during warmer parts of the day. Try to keep dry if you have stopped for recording activities (consider changing if you are sweaty to keep warm and dry).
- **Stay aware of the risks.** Be alert for signs of cold stress in both you and your co-workers, including severe shivering, drowsiness or fatigue.
- **Talk and share your feelings with co-workers.** Sometimes what we need is simply to share and feel a sense of collaboration (this is not complaining 😊).
- **Address mental health.** Be kind to yourself and recognize that seasonal fatigue is a normal response.
- **Be aware of flu season.** If eligible consider getting a flu jab. The flu is a highly infectious disease with symptoms that come on very quickly. Colds are much less serious and usually start gradually with a stuffy or runny nose and a sore throat.



We want to remind everyone, whether they are a member of the Diggers' Forum or not, that we are here to support each other during these next few months. Checking in with your friends and co-workers is crucial and so important. You are valued, and we will continue to support the conversation around mental wellbeing.

Useful links

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7daa19e5274a5eb14e6713/winterhighways_info_sheet-driving-rain-and-floods.pdf Government guidance for flooded roads

[Working Outside in Winter](#) The Safety Group, 2025

[Winter Wellbeing For Outdoor Workers | Peoplesafe](#) Peoplesafe blog, 2021

[Winter driving advice: Driving in winter conditions | The AA](#) AA Advice blog, 2020

[Winter illness | NHS inform](#) NHS Inform regarding winter illnesses

[Six self-help tips for Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD \)](#) BUPA blog about SAD, 2025

[How to combat winter depression and increase your serotonin](#) Patient.info blog, 2024

[Winter Wellness: Why the darker months affect your mood and what you can do to protect your mental health this winter: | Action Mental Health](#) Action Mental health blog, 2023

[75 Indoor Hobbies and Activities to Stay Busy In Winter](#) 75 new hobbies and activities for the Autumn and Winter months, 2024

[Historical Autumn Traditions | English Heritage](#) English Heritage, Autumn traditions

[The 65 Best Fall Movies to Watch All Autumn Long - PureWow](#) 65 movies to watch in Autumn

[30 Cozy Winter Movies to Call You Back to the Warm Couch | LoveToKnow](#) 30 movies to watch in Winter

[Winter wellbeing calendar of activities - Thrive](#) Winter wellbeing calendar for those who love gardening and the outdoors.