

# How to handle under and oversteer in icy conditions



Experiencing the kind of conditions on the road that the recent 'Beast from the East' has brought to us is enough to worry even the most experienced of drivers, and when it comes to those who drive for work as a necessity fleet managers must take all possible precautions to keep staff safe

**T**HE 'Beast from the East' hit Britain recently, causing parts of the UK to feel colder than the Arctic Circle. According to research commissioned by Goodyear Tyres UK, 53% of motorists surveyed say they find driving in the snow and ice nerve-racking, with a further 48% listing de-icing wind screens in the mornings as a problem.

When the weather is bad and the roads are slippery, there is more chance of you losing control of your vehicle. This can manifest itself in a slide resulting in oversteer or understeer:

**HOW TO HANDLE UNDERSTEER:** The vehicle is not turning as much as you would like, because the front tyres have lost grip. Don't increase your steering angle or hit the brakes, as this will only make it worse. Instead, take your foot off the accelerator and stay off the brake. The weight of your car will now shift forward. Carefully decrease the steering angle. You should be able to gently steer your car back to the desired path.

**HOW TO HANDLE OVERSTEER:** The vehicle is turning more than you want it to, because the rear tyres have lost grip. Take the following actions, while paying close attention to the response of the car. Gently accelerate and the weight of your car will shift back to the rear wheels. At the same time, steer in the same direction in which the rear end is sliding. Look in the direction you want the car to go. That way, you'll be ready to adjust the car's path as soon as it starts to respond to your corrections.

David Morris, Business Account Manager – Fleet & Public Sector, Goodyear Tyres, said: "It's no secret that winter weather can make every-day jobs more dangerous for drivers. Fleets must encourage their drivers to take all possible precautions, in order to ensure a safe journey. Correctly maintaining your vehicles' tyre pressures and tread, and even considering fitting your fleet with winter tyres, can go a long way to preparing your drivers for the challenging weather conditions throughout the winter."

## TOP TIPS

**Watch your speed:** It seems like an obvious point, but the roads are far more treacherous in poor weather. Be mindful of increased stopping distances in wet or icy conditions which will affect your tyres grip on the road.

**Check tyres for wear:** Check your tyre pressure and tread depth regularly (Goodyear recommends a minimum tread depth of 4mm for winter tyres to ensure optimal performance). You can easily check your tyre tread depth by placing a 20p coin into the tread of your tyre. If the outer rim of the coin is visible, the tyre is approaching the legal minimum tread depth and you should consider replacing it.

**Use a higher gear to start and pull away:** Spinning your wheels quickly can dig the vehicle deeper into the snow so try to resist the temptation. Placing the car into a higher gear will mean less torque output and spin, giving you a greater chance of driving out of snow or mud.

**Don't 'pump' your brakes:** If you have anti-lock brakes, keep a steady pressure on the brake pedal so that your ABS system can bring your car to a halt quickly and safely. You'll have more time to steer the car out of danger, and this could prevent you from skidding further.

**Keep your distance:** Braking distances can increase by up to ten times in snow and icy conditions. Don't just rely on brakes to bring you to a stop – make sure to decrease through your gears too to aid you safely.

**Be careful over bridges or passes:** They are well known locations for icy patches, so slow down when going over them.

**Pack an emergency kit:** Emergency supplies should include warm clothing, blanket, snacks, water, red warning triangle and a torch. An in-car phone charger is also recommended.