

What lady cabbies want you to know about rainy-day driving

Wet weather is responsible for more than 1 million vehicle accidents every year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. And the danger isn't limited to torrential downpours—even a passing spring shower can give rise to surprisingly slick roads, poor visibility and hazardous flood zones. Fortunately, veteran cabdrivers who spoke with FIRST offered simple rules of the road that guarantee a safe trip.



CERTAIN SUNGLASSES CAN ENHANCE VISIBILITY

“Not too long ago, I was driving through a rain shower when I slammed into a pothole so hard that it knocked my car out of gear,” recalls Carrie Law, manager of California Co-Op Cab Inc. in West Sacramento. “It’s amazing that I didn’t lose control of the vehicle! What’s really scary is that I didn’t even see the pothole because the mist and headlight glare had reduced the visibility to practically zero. Then I heard that polarized amber sunglasses could help—and they really do! The yellowish tint accentuates contrast and the polarized lenses cut down on the glare of headlights bouncing off wet surfaces. I feel so much safer now that I can see what’s up ahead—and I haven’t hit a pothole since.” **FIRST pick:** BluBlocker polarized amber sunglasses (\$20 and up, at BluBlocker.com or call 800-258-2562) come in several styles, including a clip-on version for prescription eyeglasses.



Carrie Law, California Co-Op Cab Inc., West Sacramento

THE SLOW LANE ISN'T ALWAYS THE SAFEST

“One night last spring, the city was hit by a wild thunderstorm with pounding rain that made road conditions extremely dangerous,” recounts Melissa Callahan, a taxi driver in Chicago. “I was nervous about driving, but I already had a passenger in the car and was halfway to his destination. So to keep myself from hydroplaning or stalling out in a puddle, I stayed in the center lane of the expressway—most roads are slightly elevated in the middle so water runs off to the sides. And when I’m stuck on a two-lane road, I usually reduce my speed so I have time to switch between the right lane and left lane, depending on which spots are flooded. Another trick I’ve learned is flicking on my hazard lights: This encourages the ‘road warriors’ to slow down as they approach my car, reducing the odds that they’ll cover my windshield with blinding splashes of water.”



Melissa Callahan, independent taxi driver, Chicago

NOT ALL HAZARDS ARE AHEAD OF YOU

“A couple years ago I was driving through a rainstorm when the cars in front of me suddenly hit their brakes,” remembers Grace Isanovich, owner of Green Gables Cab Inc. in Chicago. “Since I had been maintaining a safe distance using the two-second rule, I had plenty of time to slow down and stop. But when I glanced in my rearview mirror, I saw a limousine barreling down the lane behind me. I could tell it was going way too fast to brake on that slippery road, so I quickly changed lanes to get out of its path. And I’m lucky I did: A few seconds later the limo skidded into the car that had been in front of me. Even if *you* take precautions in rainy weather, other drivers aren’t always as careful. You literally need eyes in the back of your head. So when roads are wet, it’s smart to check your mirrors frequently—especially when you brake—to ensure you aren’t rear-ended.”



Grace Isanovich, Green Gables Cab Inc., Chicago

Top: Patrik Giardinio/Corbis. Text: Helen Matatov. Additional research: Caitlin Tansey