

What the school bus driver should know about rain.

1. Anticipate problems in the first few minutes after it starts raining or in a heavy downpour.
2. The first 10 minutes after the rain begins are the most dangerous. The rain mixes with oil from motor vehicles and oil from new asphalt. The result is a slippery roadway. After a while, the rain washes off the oil and the slippery conditions disappear.
3. If it rains heavily, there can be moving water on the roadway, even after it stops raining. This creates a situation where hydroplaning is possible. When your school bus hydroplanes, the tires lose contact with the road and have little or no traction. You may not be able to steer or to brake. Hydroplaning can happen at speeds as low as 30 mph if there is a lot of water.
4. In severe rain a school bus driver should reduce his or her speed by half. Because of its weight a school bus will seldom hydroplane. One reason it will hydroplane is if it is going too fast.

How the School bus driver should respond to rain.

1. Before you drive
 - a. Check the weather report.
 - b. Check your tires. Keep tire pressure at the suggested amount. Another reason a school bus might hydroplane is low tire pressure. If tires are worn, report it to your supervisor so the tires can be replaced.
 - c. Check that your windshield wipers are working properly. If not, replace them.
 - d. Check that you have plenty of washer fluid.
 - e. Check that window defrosters are working properly.
2. On your route
 - a. Check your brakes. Make sure that they are working properly. Remember that, when water gets into drum brakes, it reduces their efficiency. You may have to drag the brakes slightly for a short distance to dry them out and to restore normal braking.
 - b. Slow down. Wet roads can double your stopping distance. You must drive slower to be able to stop in the same distance as on a dry road.
 - c. Slow down gradually.
 - d. Avoid aggressive braking or steering.
 - e. Turn on your headlights, strobe lights, 4-way flashers.
 - f. Double your following distance.
 - g. Practice defensive driving.
 - h. Give other vehicles a lane.
 - i. Be especially careful driving through puddles.
 - j. When pulling onto a road, allow extra space for oncoming traffic. You need to compensate for the possibility that your wheels might spin on the wet pavement as you accelerate.
 - k. Watch the oncoming traffic for spraying water. Traffic can splash water from puddles across the median and on the windshields of cars in your lane.

What to do if you find yourself hydroplaning

Don't use the brakes to slow down.

First:

Release the accelerator. This allows the wheels to turn freely. Your vehicle will start to slow down. NOTE: Newer buses with an automatic transmission won't slow down as quickly as buses with standard transmissions when you take your foot off the accelerator.

Second:

If your school bus has an automatic transmission, downshift one gear.

If your school bus has a standard transmission and the drive wheels start to skid, shift to neutral or depress the clutch to let the wheels turn freely. Your vehicle will slow and the wheels will turn freely.