



# Think before you drive through floodwater

It's risky driving through floodwater. Not only can floodwater seriously damage your vehicle's engine and electrical systems, it also risks the lives of you and your passengers. You could become stranded in your car, or even end up on the roof calling for help. It's best to find somewhere to wait safely until the water subsides, or choose another route.

Even if the water appears shallow, it could be concealing debris, fallen power lines and dips or holes in the road.

Don't enter water if:

- it's flowing
- it's above the centre of your wheels
- it looks like it can't be safely walked through.

Storms and heavy rain can bring on flash floods and floodwater moves quickly. If you're unexpectedly caught in your vehicle during a flood, the following tips may help.



## Drive slowly

If it's safe to proceed through standing water, maintain a steady speed of 3.5 to 6km/h until you reach higher ground. Use a low gear, keep the engine revolutions high to maintain momentum, and avoid harsh braking or sudden acceleration.

Turn off the air conditioner and electric cooling fan to prevent water being drawn into the car and affecting operating systems. Turn on your hazard lights or fog lights so other motorists can see you.

Driving too fast in water causes a bow wave to rise in front of the car, which can flood the engine and stop it functioning. Driving slowly helps prevent this and also reduces the risk of aquaplaning.

Stopping in water can also result in engine flooding.

## Proceed cautiously

University of New South Wales research showed that a small, five passenger vehicle can aquaplane in just 15cm of water. This causes the driver to lose control irrespective of the vehicle's speed. The research also revealed that large 4WD vehicles can become unstable in just 45cm of water and begin floating in 95cm.

On a sealed road, try to stick to the centre, which is usually the highest and shallowest part. Let oncoming vehicles complete their crossing of flooded sections before you head off, so there's only a single line of traffic.

As you exit the water, dry your brakes with slow, light taps on the brake pedal.

### **Always choose the safest option**

When planning your journey, be aware of weather conditions along your route. If flooding is likely, make alternative arrangements to avoid driving through water.

Remember to obey road closure information and signs and to drive carefully on roads that have been reopened. Recently flooded roads may still be drying out and there could be hidden dangers, such as debris or deep holes.

### **Don't panic**

When a car is stuck in water, the force exerted on the doors can be very powerful and you may have to use your legs to push them open.

If this doesn't work, and you can't open a window, use a heavy, blunt object—or the metal part of a head restraint—to break the glass. However, don't try to break the windscreen as it's usually much stronger than the door windows.

For flood and storm emergencies, call 132 500 for the State Emergency Service or 000 for police, ambulance or fire services.

If you need information about flooding or road conditions and closures, call 1800 018 313 for the Department for Infrastructure and Transport, South Australia, or visit [traffic.sa.gov.au](http://traffic.sa.gov.au).



### **We're here to help**

Call our Road Safety team on 8202 4517  
or visit our website  
[raa.com.au/roadsafety](http://raa.com.au/roadsafety)