

Road users urged to be 'bike smart'

Drivers are urged to pay extra attention to people who cycle or ride motorcycles. We all share the responsibility for road safety, whether as a motorist, motorcyclist, cyclist or pedestrian.

Advice for drivers

The [Highway Code](#) provides specific advice to drivers on how to [take extra care](#) around those on two wheels.

In particular, give cyclists and motorcyclists at least as much room as you would when overtaking a car.

A bike is much harder to see than a car – so extra effort and a greater level of awareness are needed where bikes are concerned.

When you're driving, look out for riders:

- when turning right
- when emerging from junctions
- when overtaking

Drivers also need to:

- slow down
- pay greater attention to their surroundings
- never drive after drinking or taking drugs
- always wear a seatbelt

There is further information at this [link](#):

Advice for cyclists and motorcyclists

Cyclists and motorcyclists are extremely vulnerable on the roads. When involved in a road collision, their injuries tend to be more severe.

Before they take to the road, they should make sure that they can be seen with appropriate clothing and lighting.

They (as well as pedestrians) need to be aware of their surroundings and, particularly at this time of year, make every effort to be seen by wearing reflective or hi-vis clothing.

Motobike riders also need to:

- slow down
- pay greater attention to their surroundings
- never ride a motorbike after drinking or taking drugs

You can get more useful advice on the [rules and advice for drivers and riders page](#).

More useful links

[Strong winds and heavy rain warning – information and advice](#)

With a weather warning for strong winds and heavy rain in place today there could be travel delays, power cuts, large waves in coastal areas, localised flooding, fallen trees, damage to property, and risk of flying debris.

Weather warning

The Met Office has sent out a [weather warning for strong winds and heavy rain](#).

Weather warnings let the public and emergency services know about potentially hazardous conditions.

You can find out more about weather warnings on [the Met Office website](#).

Emergency numbers

You should note the following numbers in case of emergency:

- Emergency services – 999 or 112
- Northern Ireland Electricity Networks – 03457 643 643
- NI Gas Emergency Service – 0800 002 001
- Northern Ireland Water Waterline – 03457 440 088
- Flooding Incident Line – 0300 2000 100
- Housing Executive – 03448 920 901

Report a fallen tree or blocked road

You can report a fallen tree or blocked road at the following link:

Reporting a power cut

If your power is off and you want to report it or get more information, contact NIE Networks or visit their website:

You can find an updated list of areas affected by power cuts on the [NIE Networks website](#).

Heavy rain and flooding advice

You can get information about how to prepare for flooding and other useful information on this page:

If any flooding happens, you can report it by phoning the Flooding Incident Line on 0300 2000 100.

There is general flooding advice in the following section:

Roads information

You can get the latest updates about roads at this link:

School closures

You can find information about school closures at this link:

Public transport

For the latest information on bus and train services, go to the 'Travel update' section on the [Translink website](#).

Forests, country parks and nature reserves

You're advised not to visit forests, [country parks](#) and [nature reserves](#) until the strong winds weather warning is over due to the increased risks of fallen trees, branches and debris.

Advice for road users

All road users are asked to pay attention to any road signs and temporary arrangements put in place during severe weather. Longer journey times or cancellations are possible as road, rail, air and ferry services are affected, with the chance that some roads and bridges could close.

High-sided vehicles are most affected by windy weather, but strong gusts can also blow a car, cyclist, motorcyclist or horse rider off course. This can happen on open stretches of road exposed to strong cross winds, or when passing bridges or gaps in the hedges.

In very windy weather a vehicle may be affected by turbulence created by large vehicles. Motorcyclists are particularly affected, so keep well back from them when they are overtaking a high-sided vehicle.

Motorists are also advised to drive with care due to possible wind-blown debris.

Travel advice

If you're planning to travel by air or sea, you should check with the ferry company or airline in case there are any delays or cancellations.

Strong winds advice

You should:

- keep your property in a well-maintained condition (for example replace/repair any loose roof tiles, guttering, and so on that could potentially come loose and cause injury or damage to property)
- secure loose objects such as ladders, garden furniture, wheelie bins, trampolines, or anything else that could be blown around
- close and securely fasten doors and windows
- park vehicles in a garage (if you have one) or keep them clear of buildings, trees, walls, and fences
- make sure you are prepared should there be a power cut

During a storm you should:

- stay indoors as much as possible
- if you do go out, try not to walk or shelter close to buildings and trees
- not go outside to repair damage while the storm is ongoing
- not drive unless your journey is really necessary
- if you're a farmer, not enter fields bordered by trees or with powerlines unless absolutely necessary

After a storm you should:

- be careful not to touch any electrical/ telephone cables that have been blown down or are still hanging
- not walk too close to walls, buildings, and trees as they could have been weakened

Preparing for a power cut

It's important to be prepared for a potential loss of power. You should:

- know where your household fuses and trip switches are so that you can check if the problem is with your electrics only
- test smoke alarms regularly
- keep a supply of new batteries in torches and radios (for checking updates on news bulletins)
- keep a supply of candles
- keep mobile phones, laptops or tablets fully charged – so you will have use of battery power for a short time at least
- have the telephone numbers you might need to hand (as well as mobile phones, a non-mains powered landline telephone will help you stay in touch during any disruptions to your power supply)

- if you have a baby at home, make sure you have a supply of pre-prepared formula baby milk (if used) and prepare a flask of hot water to heat bottles and baby food (it is always safer to make up a fresh feed; when this is not possible, feeds should never be stored for longer than 24 hours)

If you depend on electrical equipment that is vital to your health, contact Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) Networks to get on their Critical Care Register:

If your electricity goes off

If your electricity goes off, you should:

- check your fuses and trip switches – then check if your neighbours are without power
- leave one light on
- leave your fridge/ freezer switched on with the door shut to maintain a low temperature
- check that other electrical appliances and machinery are switched off at the wall
- preferably use a torch, oil or gas lamp as a source of light rather than candles
- if you must use naked flames, please take extra care and make certain that they are put out before you go to bed
- check on elderly or vulnerable neighbours in your area to make sure they are okay
- if you are using a generator, be careful where you site it in case of carbon monoxide poisoning

Water supply

In the event of difficulties with the water and sewerage, you will get the most up-to-date information on areas experiencing disruption on the [NI Water website](#). This includes a full postcode search facility.

You can also phone Waterline 24 hours a day/ 365 days a year on:

More useful links

[Dangers of buying fake goods](#)

People are being warned about the dangers of buying counterfeit goods, particularly health and safety risks. Fake goods may seem like a bargain but they can be dangerous and also could be funding organised crime.

Sub-standard

Anyone buying [counterfeit goods](#) may see the sub-standard materials and replica logos as a small price to pay for cut-price 'designer' brands.

However, not only can many of the products cause harm, but profits from the sales may be used to help pay for other illegal activities such as drug dealing and [human trafficking](#).

Thousands of websites are dedicated to the sale of counterfeit goods.

To [avoid online fraud](#), be aware not just of what you're buying but also that using these sites to buy something leaves you open to:

- identity fraud
- having your devices and bank accounts compromised

Report sale of suspected fake goods

To report the sale of suspect counterfeit goods contact:

More useful links

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[Prepare for winter driving conditions](#)

Road users are urged to take extra care during the darker months and be prepared for the challenges of winter driving. From now until April around 300 staff, 130 gritters, and 12 snow blowers will be on standby to keep traffic moving on main roads during wintry conditions.

Take extra care on roads

Darker mornings, evenings and lower temperatures around this time of year make conditions more difficult.

Road surface temperatures are usually a few degrees lower, so drivers should not rely on in-car temperature sensors as an indicator of possible frost or ice.

Drivers should:

- slow down
- stay focused and alert
- never ever drink or take drugs and drive
- always wear a seatbelt

In particular, watch out for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders, as they will be much more difficult to see in the dark mornings and evenings.

Remember, you should heed the advice in the Highway Code and drive, ride or cycle with extra care, even if roads have been salted.

You should also be prepared for road conditions changing over short distances, and take care when overtaking gritters.

You should note that:

- a journey could start or end on an untreated section of road
- salt does not act immediately, it needs vehicles to turn it into an effective solution
- roads can refreeze after spreading, particularly in showery conditions

There is more information on the page below:

We all have a personal responsibility to keep ourselves and other road users safe.

Salting roads

The main roads which carry more than 1,500 vehicles a day are salted. In exceptional circumstances, some roads carrying between 1,000 and 1,500 vehicles daily will also be salted.

Arrangements are also in place to get the help of contractors, including farmers, to clear blocked roads following heavy snow.

The following page has more information:

Extra salt bins are provided on routes not included as part of the gritting network. These are free-of-charge for people to use themselves.

Up-to-date road conditions information

You can get up-to-date information about road conditions during the winter on the [TrafficwatchNI](#) website.

More useful links

[People urged to get flu vaccine](#)

People are urged to get the free flu vaccine if offered it, even if they feel fit and healthy. The vaccine offers protection against a number of viruses which are expected to circulate this winter.

Important to get vaccinated

The vaccine changes each year to cover the strains which are likely to be around over the course of the flu season, so it's important to get immunised every year.

This year two new and more effective vaccines are being introduced to improve the protection offered to those at risk:

- a vaccine for people aged 65 and over), which has been specifically designed to increase immunity in this age group
- a vaccine for people aged under 65 who have underlying health conditions and pregnant women

The vaccine does not give people the flu.

You can find out more at the page below:

Getting the vaccine

Everyone who is eligible for the vaccine should make themselves aware of their own GP surgery's flu vaccination arrangements. They will be able to get the vaccine by the end of November.

If you have any queries, you should contact your GP directly.

As it takes approximately two weeks following vaccination to develop maximum protection against flu, it is important to get vaccinated early.

If you wait until flu starts circulating, it may be too late for the vaccine to protect you.

Everyone should aim to have the vaccine by early December.

Pregnant women

Pregnant women are more likely to have serious illness if they catch flu.

They will be invited at all stages of pregnancy to get the vaccine by their GP, to help protect them and their unborn baby.

Children

Primary school children will get the vaccination at school, while pre-school children will receive it through their local GP surgery.

Most children get the vaccine through a quick and painless nasal spray.

You can find out more on the [flu vaccine for children page](#).

Flu symptoms

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness, and in some cases, very dangerous.

The flu virus spreads easily and quickly through the air when people cough and sneeze without covering their nose and mouth.

The same [flu symptoms](#) are experienced by both adults and children:

- fever
- chills
- aching muscles and joints
- headache
- extreme tiredness

These symptoms can last between two and eight days and, for some, can lead to serious illness and result in a stay in hospital.

More useful links