



Short Safety Subject

Short Safety Subjects are provided by the Public Safety Business Center, Fort Bragg, NC. Our intent is to provide safety topics for the purpose of increasing safety awareness and improving safety performance. Additional Short Safety Subjects are available on the PSBC Business Management Web Site at:

www.bragg.army.mil/psbc-bm/PubsAndForms/ShortSafetySubjects.htm

Water Skiing On Four Wheels

When it's raining, drivers don't often recognize the hazards - until it's too late. Hydroplaning occurs when your tires lose contact with the road and ride on a layer of water between the tires and the road. You may not even realize it's happening until you try to maneuver and find you're not in control of your vehicle. Your chances of hydroplaning are effected by a combination of circumstances:

- Water volume. Although hydroplaning is more likely with half an inch or more of water on the road, even moisture from dew or fog can create conditions ripe for hydroplaning.
- Speed. Partial hydroplaning can occur at speeds above 30 mph. At speeds above 55mph, your tires may lose all contact with the road.
- Tires. Good tire tread can reduce your chances of hydroplaning. Tread grooves should be at least 1/16 of an inch deep. Check your tires periodically by placing a penny in a tread groove with Lincoln's head upside down. If the top of his head shows, it's time to get new tires.
- Vehicle Weight. A lighter vehicle gets less traction and increases the risks of hydroplaning. Also, if too much weight is concentrated in the front or rear of your vehicle, you are more likely to hydroplane.
- Road Surface. A smooth surface or roads that accumulate a lot of water create ideal hydroplaning conditions.

The chances of your vehicle hydroplaning are greatly increased after heavy rains, when water has had time to accumulate on the road. Because of the high level of rainfall that we have in this region, you can't always avoid hydroplaning. When your car starts to hydroplane, there are some simple things that you can do to help maintain control:

- Follow the tire tracks of the car in front of you.
- **Don't** steer, brake, or accelerate abruptly.

- Slow down and increase your following distance.
- If you hydroplane, remain calm, ease off the gas, avoid braking, and steer straight. If you do skid, steer in the direction of the skid.
- If you must brake, do so once your vehicle regains contact with the road. Pump your brakes to avoid skidding or brake lockup. Cars with antilock brakes should keep continuous pressure on the brake pedal.

There is also a simple maneuver that can help you to maintain control of your vehicle at higher speeds when there is standing water on the road. By shifting your vehicle's position from the center of the lane to one side of the lane, and straddling the puddles, your tires will always have better traction up on the higher road surface. A cool head, common sense, and knowing what to do can help you react properly and prevent a disastrous mishap.