

Winter Driving In Orkney

What drivers should do:

- **Check your licence** is valid and your vehicle has a current MOT, service and insurance.
- Pay attention to **local and national weather forecasts** and in particular, any weather warnings.
- Be aware that the **Churchill Barriers** may be closed during periods of high winds and/or tides. You can check for the latest conditions on various social media platforms, such as https://twitter.com/OIC_Roads, OIC Telegram (available on personal phones only) at t.me/OIC_Roads or [the Orkney Islands Council facebook page](#).
- Consider **weather and tidal** conditions before you embark on a journey.
- Look out for **ice** – black ice is particularly dangerous, as it is not visible and can persist, or reoccur, even after the road surface has been treated.
- **Dawn frosts** also catch drivers unaware. At first light a clear sky will allow heat to radiate quickly from the road surface causing icy patches to form on wet or damp roads.
- Allow **extra time** for travel and for your car to be de-iced, if necessary.
- **Don't use a mobile phone** while driving, including hands-free kit.
- **Don't drive under the influence** of drugs or alcohol.

For pre-journey checks the RAC uses the following handy acronym:



Fuel – Make sure you have enough fuel for your journey, bearing in mind fuel consumption may be increased in adverse conditions.

Oil – Make sure your oil levels are between the minimum and maximum.

Rubber – Check tyres have enough tread and pressures are correct. Check wiper blades.

Coolant – Check your car's levels are sufficient and top up if required.

Electrics – Check the battery and lights are working.

Screen Wash – Check levels and top up with a quality screen wash additive.

Make sure you have a winter pack in your vehicle:

Ice scraper and de-icer	Blankets	Torch and spare batteries	First aid kit
Fully charged mobile phone	Warm clothes, hat, gloves, waterproofs and high-vis jackets	Sturdy footwear	Hot drinks and snacks
Shovel	Sack, cardboard or old rugs	Warning triangles	Spare glasses

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Orkney Islands Council's Winter Service

We prioritise our gritting response based on the usage and volume of traffic of each road as well as the layout of the road itself. These priorities are categorised into 1's, 2's and 3's.

Our Winter Service resource consists of 21 gritters and 4 tow behind units. Last winter we used 5,500 tonnes of salt on treating our roads, footways, and filling salt bins.

Treatment starts at 6am, with no new routes started after 6pm. This is based on the resources available, and the level of traffic needed to effectively activate the salt.

Morning targets for completion of these routes are 08:00 for Priority 1's and 10:00 for Priority 2's. Our evening targets are 16:00 for Priority 1's and 18:00 for Priority 2's. Priority 3's are not routinely treated unless snow conditions are preventing access.

For more information visit:
[Winter Service Plan \(orkney.gov.uk\)](http://orkney.gov.uk)
[Guide to Winter Roads in Orkney](#)

Before setting off

DEMIST windscreen - use aircon or open windows

CLEAR all snow from the windows

Clear snow from the **ROOF** of the car so it doesn't slide down your windscreen

Don't leave **WIPERS** on auto when stopped, to prevent damaged blades

During the journey

Apply brakes **GENTLY**

Leave plenty of **ROOM** between cars

OBSERVE speed limits and drive to conditions

AVOID overtaking

Unavoidable Journeys

Wear **APPROPRIATE** clothing

CONSIDER active travel instead of driving, i.e. walking or cycling

Heavy goods vehicles should have **REVERSING** areas planned out and clearly marked

If driving a council vehicle, a banksman **MUST** be used where mandated

Accidents and Support

- **STOP** the vehicle in a safe place and switch on the hazard lights. Don't leave the engine running for warmth, as there is a danger of carbon monoxide entering your vehicle.
- **CALL** the appropriate emergency services, if required, by dialling **999**.
- If caught in a **SNOWDRIFT**, don't leave the vehicle unless you are in sight of a suitable destination – let help come to you.
- If you get stuck, straighten the **STEERING**, and clear the snow from the wheels.
- If you must abandon your vehicle, try to leave it out of the path of snowploughs and advise the **POLICE**.