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Stay safe this winter with pro tips from rally world champion Jan Kopecký

- › ŠKODA works driver advises driving with foresight in challenging weather conditions
- › “Adjust speed, maintain adequate distance from the car in front and avoid distractions”
- › Winter tyres with a sufficient tread depth of at least four millimetres are a must

Mladá Boleslav, 27 December 2019 – In rain or snow, driving in the winter months requires great care. It can become dangerous at temperatures around freezing because the conditions on the road can change quickly. In this interview, Czech rally professional Jan Kopecký, ŠKODA works driver and WRC2 world champion from 2018 gives valuable tips on how drivers can recognise treacherous road conditions early on and keep their ŠKODA under control even in challenging situations.

Jan, as a rally driver you are used to driving in challenging conditions such as on wet roads, in snow and on ice. On public roads, drivers can also find themselves in these situations, especially in autumn and winter. What can we do to be prepared?

Jan Kopecký: The most important advice that every driver should bear in mind at all times, not only in autumn and winter: Don't let yourself be distracted at the wheel, always drive at a sufficient distance from other road users and maintain an appropriate speed. Drivers should check the weather forecast before setting off and allow additional time if necessary. Starting the journey earlier can reduce stress, especially on the way to the office. Before setting off, the car should be completely free of snow and ice. This also includes scraping the roof and the bonnet. Only people who have good visibility can react well. Besides, cars driving behind must not be endangered by falling snow or ice. Your driving style must always adapt to the conditions of the road. Every driver should prepare their vehicle for journeys in the cold season. Winter tyres with a sufficient tread depth of at least four millimetres are a must.

How can we recognise that the road is going to be slippery or icy?

Kopecký: At low temperatures, darker patches on the road are a sign of slippery surfaces; if the road has a glittery appearance, you should ease off the accelerator. When there is snow on the ground, the road surface is often slippery; salt can turn the snow into slush, which also increases the risk of slipping. Your speed should also be reduced when the snow is firm because the road could be frozen under the snow, which you as a driver may not immediately notice. Therefore, drive with foresight and pay attention to your distance from other road users. In such situations, you should always maintain a gap of three seconds from the person in front.

What is the best way to react when you approach a slippery section of road?

Kopecký: Rule number one: keep calm and do not panic. In principle, the driver should reduce their speed by at least half on a snowy or icy road because your braking distance is three to four times longer in these weather conditions. To avoid the car slipping and getting out of control, abrupt steering and braking should be avoided. Personally, I either don't drive on slippery roads at all or I drive as if I had fresh eggs in the boot. In vehicles with a manual transmission, the clutch should be depressed if the vehicle skids, then the wheels only have to transmit longitudinal forces. Nevertheless, if the car slips on a bend, it is usually enough to steer into the slide, i.e. steer the direction the car is sliding to regain control. Changing lanes when there is snow between lanes also



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works best if you step on the clutch and let the car roll into the other lane with a little more momentum.

Both making adjustments to our driving style and having the right equipment can prevent problems on winter roads. What should motorists have in the car with them during the winter?

Kopecný: You should have an ice scraper and a brush to remove snow from your car. At ŠKODA, these two Simply Clever features are included as standard in the new OCTAVIA in the fuel cap and the door. Sometimes a de-icer spray can also be helpful: It makes the job much easier if the layer of ice is particularly thick or you do not have much strength. Snow chains are a must when driving in the mountains, but putting them on should be practised beforehand. There should also be sufficient windscreen washer fluid and antifreeze in the water tank. With older car batteries, a battery check is highly recommended before winter sets in.

What can we do to prevent the wheels from spinning when pulling away on slippery roads?

Kopecný: When driving a modern ŠKODA, traction control usually helps in such cases. In vehicles with a manual gearbox, you can also engage second gear to start and play a bit with the clutch and accelerator pedal to avoid stalling.

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Stay safe this winter with pro tips from rally world champion Jan Kopecný

ŠKODA Motorsport works driver Jan Kopecný has valuable tips for drivers on how to recognise treacherous road conditions in good time and how to keep their vehicle safely under control even under challenging conditions.

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

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- › currently offers its customers nine passenger-car series: the CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, SCALA, OCTAVIA, KAROQ, KODIAQ, as well as the KAMIQ and the SUPERB.
- › delivered more than 1.25 million vehicles to customers around the world in 2018.
- › has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. In association with the Group, ŠKODA AUTO independently develops and manufactures vehicles, as well as components such as engines and transmissions.
- › operates at three locations in the Czech Republic; manufactures in China, Russia, Slovakia, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan with local partners.
- › employs over 39,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.
- › is pressing ahead with the transformation from a traditional car manufacturer to the 'Simply Clever company for the best mobility solutions' as part of the ŠKODA 2025 Strategy.

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