

New South Wales Fire Brigades Operations Bulletin 2010/02 Driving through flood waters



Issue

The NSWFB is often asked to assist during floods and this may require driving a vehicle through flood water.

Driving through flood water should be avoided unless absolutely necessary, as it carries a high level of risk that may not be easily controlled.

Drivers of NSWFB vehicles must take extreme care when driving through flood waters to ensure that the crew and vehicle are not put at risk and to minimise damage to the vehicle.

Hazards

Hazards associated with driving through flood waters include:

- fast flowing water that could wash away your vehicle
- varying water depth
- damaged or washed away roads, bridges and causeways
- objects shifted from their usual positions
- floating debris
- health hazards from stagnant water, sewage or hazardous materials
- waves caused by other vehicles, boats or weather.

Before entering the water

1. Determine the depth and flow of the water using visual cues such as depth markers, curbing and guttering and other vehicles. If this cannot be determined for the entire path of travel, do not enter the water.



WARNING

Do not enter flood water on foot to test the depth of the water.

2. Do not drive through fast-flowing flood waters.
3. Do not drive in flood water which is deeper than:
 - 200 mm for two wheel drive vehicles
 - the height of the vehicle's drive axles for four wheel drive vehicles.
4. Take extreme care with minor fleet four wheel drive vehicles, as they are well sealed, particularly at the rear, and may float.
5. Do not drive in water after driving for long periods as the brakes and drive trains will be hot and may be damaged by the water. Stop and allow the vehicle to cool.

Operations Bulletin 2010/02

Driving through flood waters

While driving through water

1. Always travel at low speed.
2. Do not pass or overtake other vehicles, as the bow wave or wash will increase the depth and force of the water.
3. Be aware that there will be water on and in the brakes and braking will be affected.

If you get stuck

1. If your vehicle gets stuck, or stalls and can't be restarted, abandon it and move immediately to higher ground.
2. Notify your Communication Centre and seek assistance from the Fleet Operations Officer or your Fleet Area Manager.

After leaving the water

1. Always test and dry out the brakes with repeated light applications of the brakes at low speed.
2. Check appliance air tanks for water by bleeding air from the tanks.

On return to station

1. On returning to your station after driving a NSWFB vehicle through flood waters, contact the Fleet Operations Officer or your Fleet Area Manager to check if any extra servicing is required.
2. If water has entered the vehicle, follow the procedures in Safety Bulletin 2007/05, [Equipment inspections - possible water damage](#).

Contact officers: Bill Ewing or Glen Breen, Fleet Operations Officers, (02) 9742 7359, Fleet-Officer.NSWFB@fire.nsw.gov.au, or Leo McCrory, Manager Operational Appliance Training, (02) 9318 4356, Leo.McCrory@fire.nsw.gov.au

Noted, Station Commander	A	B	C	D	Other

Previous Operations Bulletin: 2010/01, [Reducing the impact of heavy vehicle fires](#).