



Vehicle Submersion

In 2007, approximately 370 lives were lost from vehicle submersion. Drivers should always avoid flood waters and locations where water is deep enough for tires to lose contact with the ground. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as little as six inches of water can cause a vehicle to lose control and stall, while two feet can carry away most vehicles, including sport utility vehicles (SUV's) and trucks.

It is much easier to avoid vehicle submersion than it is to survive. Drivers should:

- Avoid travel during hurricanes and major storms.
- Never drive across a flooded roadway.
- Adhere to road and traffic barricades.
- Take extra care when driving at night on roads near water.

If your vehicle does enter deep water, follow these steps to improve your chance of survival:

- Try to remain as calm as possible and remember the following steps.
- Keep your seat belt on until you are ready to escape. A seat belt can help steady you as you try to open a door or break a window.
- Immediately after hitting the water, try to open a window and escape to the top of the vehicle before water rushes in.
- Assess the current before swimming to safety. If you are unsure which direction to swim, let out some breath and follow the bubbles.
- If water has rushed in, do not attempt to open a door until pressure is equalized on both sides of the door (usually when water reaches your shoulder or has nearly filled the passenger compartment).
- While you wait for pressure to equalize, make sure door is unlocked, keep your shoes on and remove any heavy garments that will weigh you down and cause you to sink.
- If you cannot open any windows or doors, there will be a small air pocket near the part of the vehicle that is highest in the water. Move to this location, take a deep breath and kick the window open. A side or rear window is easier to break than the windshield.
- If you live near bodies of water or flood zones, consider purchasing a hammer-type device. Keep this safely tucked away in the glove compartment or a unit mounted to the floor, so it does not cause injury.

Vehicle submersion happens quickly and often in a state of panic, so it is important for families to continually rehearse how to escape. While avoiding vehicle submersion is the safest route, knowing how to escape can mean the difference between life and death.