



BusTrusted
DRIVER'S LIBRARY

VOLUME 04

BRAKING & FOLLOWING IN BAD WEATHER

Space, speed, and brake technique for a 45-foot coach when the road turns against you.

Every bus. Vetted. Trusted.

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Educational guide — not legal advice. Verify current federal, state, county, and local regulations before relying on any content.



VOLUME 04 · SAFETY SERIES

Braking & Following Distance in Bad Weather

A loaded coach is 40,000+ pounds of momentum carrying half a hundred lives. Weather doesn't make coaches crash — speed and space decisions do. Here is the professional's system for rain, snow, fog, ice, and wind.

1 second per 10 feet of vehicle under 40 mph · add 1 second over 40 mph

45-ft coach = 6 seconds at highway speed (dry)



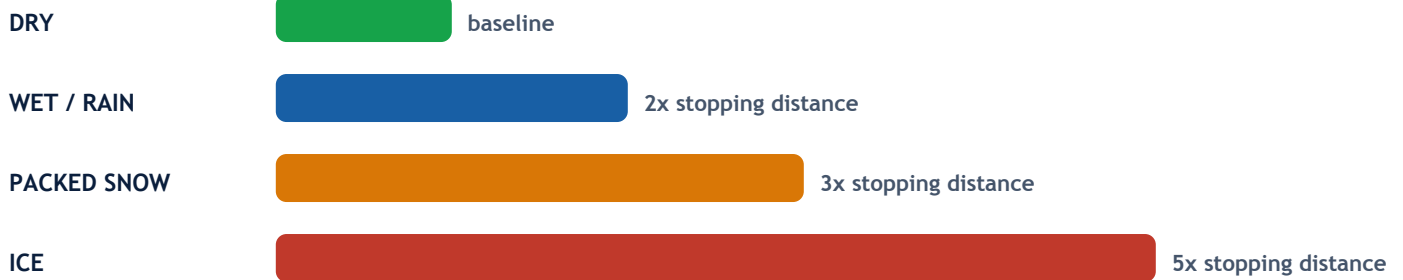
RAIN: double it (12s) SNOW: triple it ICE: park it

Figure 1 — The space formula in practice: distance is the only brake that never fades.

The following-distance rule

- 1 second per 10 feet of vehicle below 40 mph — a 45-foot coach needs 5 seconds.
- Add 1 second above 40 mph — call it 6 seconds on the highway, dry.
- Weather multiplies it: double in rain (10–12s), more in snow. Count it off a fixed object — 'one-thousand-one...'

WHAT THE ROAD DOES TO YOUR BRAKES — a loaded coach multiplies everything



On ice the answer is not a technique. It is parking the coach.

Figure 2 — Stopping distance multipliers a loaded coach obeys whether you believe them or not.

Brake technique — ABS and not

- With ABS (most modern coaches): one firm, steady application. Do NOT pump. Steer where you want to go and let the system do its job.
- Without ABS: controlled braking just short of lock-up; if wheels lock — release, roll, reapply (stab braking).



- Downgrades: right gear BEFORE the hill, engine/retarder doing the work, light steady pedal. On slick roads, switch a sensitive retarder off per your manufacturer.
- Curves & ramps: brake before, never in. Posted ramp speeds were written for cars, not a high-CG coach.

The special hazards

- Hydroplaning — can begin around 30 mph in standing water: ease off the throttle, wheel straight, no hard braking; wait for the tires to bite.
- Black ice — road looks wet but tire spray disappears; mirrors ice up; ~34°F and drizzle = treat as ice. Bridges and shaded cuts freeze first.
- Fog — low beams only, speed inside your sight line, and if you can't see: EXIT. Never stop in a travel lane.
- Wind — a coach is a sail: bridges, plains, tunnel mouths, and passing trucks. Two hands, less speed, and if gusts move you across the paint — get off the road.

THE PROFESSIONAL'S RULE

No charter is worth a coach on its side. Delay it, reroute it, or park it. A late group is a story they'll tell; a crash is a tragedy they'll carry. Your customers hired a professional precisely so somebody would make that call.

Sources & further reading: State CDL manuals (Space Management; Driving Conditions); FMCSA CMV safe-driving guidance.

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