

Snow Socks are an inexpensive alternative to winter tyres or traditional snow chains. This brief examines their function and highlights the risks involved in using ancillary equipment on vehicles.

What are they?

The snow sock is an elasticated cover made to fit around the existing tyres fitted to the driving wheels of a vehicle. The material used to contact the road surface is typically Kevlar, with a hairy, coarse surface that provides a greater level of grip than summer tyres in most snow and ice conditions.

Quicker to fit than snow chains, you can fit and remove snow socks single-handed. Moreover, you can now legally use them in place of traditional snow chains, which are mandatory during winter conditions in several European countries, including France, Germany, Slovenia, and the Czech Republic (there is no legal requirement in the U.K.).

Only speed rated up to 50mph, it is recommended that snow socks are removed when driving on gritted or cleared surfaces otherwise shredding may occur which will render them ineffective.

Considerations

If driving conditions are poor enough to warrant the use of snow socks, then you should consider if the journey is necessary.

Research suggests that on-board technology and ancillary equipment meant to improve control of a vehicle, whilst driving in snowy and/or icy conditions can lead to drivers taking greater risks.

Ice and snow covered surfaces can vary in nature and will affect the traction provided by snow sock.

There are risks associated with fitting the equipment e.g. at the roadside, exposed to passing traffic driving in icy conditions and potential musculoskeletal and hand/finger injuries.



Conclusion

Snow socks do provide greater levels of traction in conditions where drivers may have trouble getting their vehicles moving and maintaining control. Nonetheless, we recommend issuing guidelines to drivers of company cars and/or vans, when issued as ancillary equipment. Moreover, the equipment should not facilitate driving recklessly in icy conditions, nor when the conditions pose a significant safety risk. Companies must also bear in mind the risks of fitting the equipment, such activity on a company owned vehicle could be classed as 'maintenance' with the associated employee liability risks.