

WHAT IS HYDROPLANING?

Hydroplaning is when a vehicle starts sliding uncontrollably due to the tires encountering more water than the treads can displace.

When driving at high speeds over wet pavement, the water begins to push the front tires off the ground slightly, creating a thin film between the tire and the road. That film, and the resulting separation of the road and tire, causes the driver to lose control of the car and possibly end up in a crash.

While it may not be considered hydroplaning, the most dangerous time to drive is during the beginning of a rainstorm. This is because the oils on the pavement that are left by vehicles rise from the ground and make the pavement slippery.

SAFE



TIRE MAKES DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE GROUND

UNSAFE



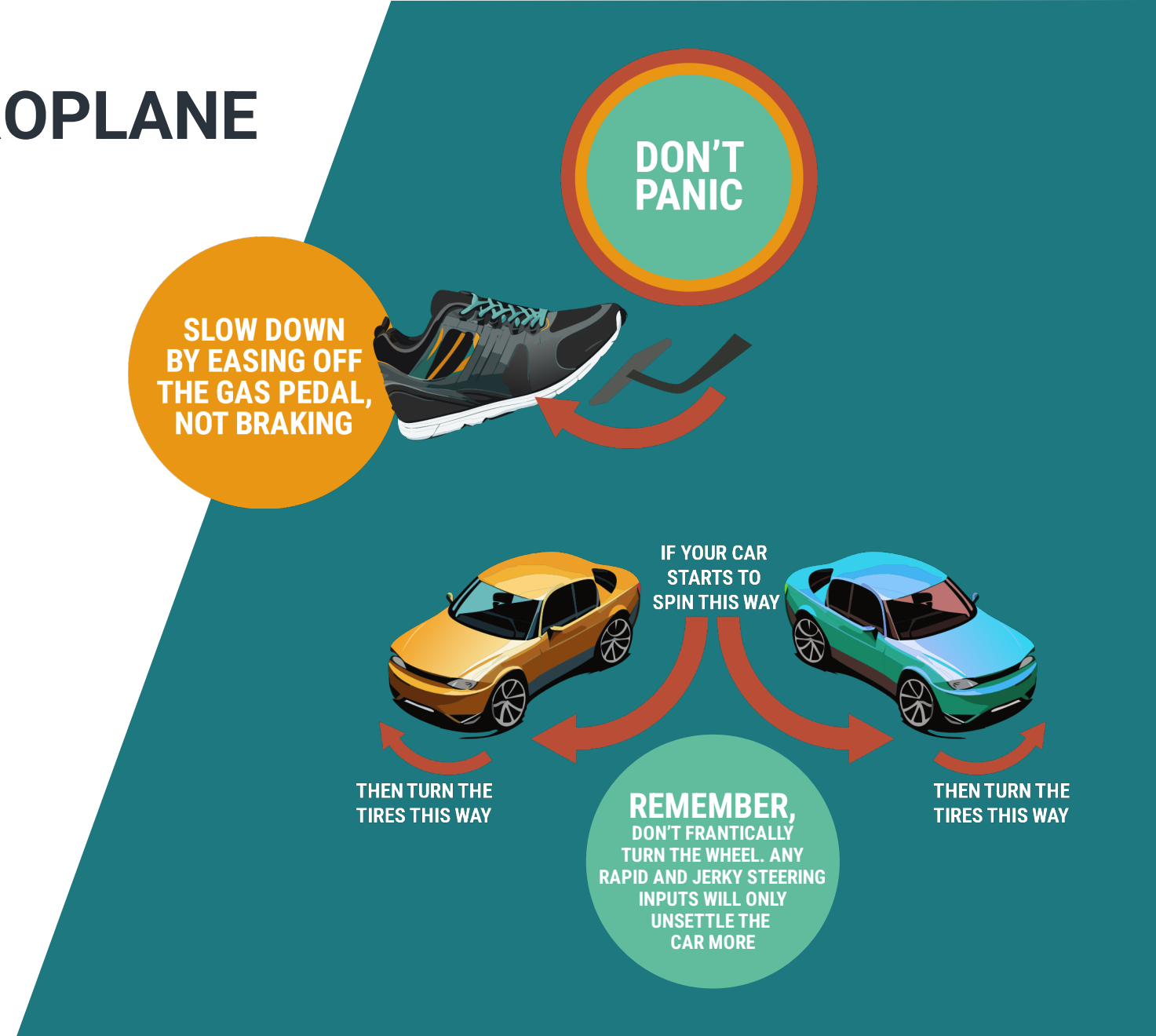
TIRE SLIDING ON A THIN FILM OF WATER

THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME TO DRIVE IS AT THE BEGINNING OF A RAINSTORM

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HYDROPLANE

The key is not to overreact or do something that makes a bad situation worse.

- Slow down by easing off the gas pedal, not braking: If you sense your car has lost traction and is hydroplaning, it's vital to bring your speed down in a controlled manner. The first step is to lift off the gas pedal. Avoid slamming on your brakes, as it can worsen any loss of control.
- The next step depends on how severely your vehicle is hydroplaning:
 - If your car starts spinning: If your car hydroplanes and starts to turn, remember to steer in the direction of the spin. This sounds easier than it is because a driver's instinct often is to counteract the spin by turning in the opposite direction. If the rear of the car or truck is sliding left, turn the wheel left. And if it's sliding right – you guessed it – turn the wheel to the right.
 - Remember, don't frantically turn the wheel. Any rapid and jerky steering inputs will only unsettle the car more.



HOW TO AVOID HYDROPLANING

Tire maintenance is essential

Check the tread depth, make sure the tire pressure is correct, and don't drive on tires that might be frayed or damaged from curbing or encounters with potholes.

Slow down

If it's heavy rain, slow down more.

Skip cruise control during rainy weather

Using cruise control in the rain can cause your car to hydroplane. If you are using cruise control when your vehicle starts hydroplaning, you should immediately turn the cruise control off and try to safely slow your vehicle down.

Try to drive in the tire tracks left by other vehicles

Most of the water will have already been displaced, meaning there's more space for your tire to make full contact with the pavement.

No sudden movements!

This goes back to the "stay calm" advice. Remember that wet roads mean less traction. Don't slam on the brakes. Don't twirl the steering wheel. Doing these things will only exacerbate the loss of traction and possible spin caused by hydroplaning. If you brake, do so gently and know that modern cars have anti-lock brakes, so pumping them isn't necessary.

