



Mud Driving.....

Tips

The Hazards of Mud Driving

Mud driving can be one of the most challenging aspects of four wheel driving and can cause two of the most unwanted situations, that of having no traction and of being bogged down to your chassis, which then leads you into the most uncomfortable experience of recovering your vehicle, being up to your neck in “Sh—“ Mud. Mud is probably the major cause of bingles when driving off road, you ask any four wheel drivers how they got their bodywork modified and the answer will be more often than not Mud. I can tell you from my own experience that being at the top of a slope looking down and wondering whether you will be able to maintain traction when driving down is the most daunting experience ever, because once you have committed yourself there’s no turning back and if you start to slide then you have to call on all of your experience to get to the bottom without doing damage to you, your passengers, or your vehicle

You have to get the delicate balance between the required momentum and retained control, this varies because you get mud and mud some is grippy and others may just as well be ice, some you can drive over and others you sink into. You neither accelerate hard or brake hard you have to be very gentle with both of those controls.

So how do we minimize the risks? The first thing we must do is stop get out and look then think assess and decide.

When driving on tracks keep to the existing wheel ruts if possible they will guide your vehicle through the mud with out you having to do any or much steering, they will also prevent your vehicle side slipping if you encounter a cross slope, always know where your wheels are pointing as it is easy to be going in one direction and pointing in another, so when you get some traction you may shoot off into the bush because that’s the way your wheels are pointing, be careful if you decide to straddle the ruts as it is very easy for one axle or the other to fall back into the ruts with the result that you are going side ways.

When going uphill check the track first to see what obstacles you have to avoid, do some track building if required, plan your route, start off slowly in a low gear keeping to your planned track, if you get stuck reverse down never try to turn around, then try it a little faster if you think its safe to do so, turning the steering wheel from side to side will also sometimes give you a little more traction as the sidewalls grip the sides of ruts, if all else fails then further track building or winching may be the answer.

Slippery descents can be dangerous so if there is an alternative route then take it. If there is a real threat of sliding then track building or lowering the vehicle by winch may be the safest method, otherwise select first low range keeping your feet of the brakes and drive down the slope, if the vehicle starts to slide then you need to act fast, This is the time when all instincts tell you to hit the brakes, but that’s the last thing to do, you must accelerate gently so that the you regain steering control a bit more speed is better than a two tonne mass going only where gravity wants it to, a little bit of hand brake will impede momentum as traction is regained but don’t over do it. Obviously if there is an alternative route that is safer always, take it.

You can increase your vehicles ability to maintain traction by fitting mud tyres, by engaging all the traction enhancing gear such as diff locks that you have, but be aware that having the front diff lock engaged will reduce your steering effectiveness, mud chains are very helpful but do chop up the tracks so use them sparingly and always carry a spade and a snatch strap.

Safe Driving
Norm Baker