Fact Sheet

Locust swarms



How to drive safely and protect your vehicle

Locust swarms can reduce visibility, make roads slippery and damage your vehicle. A few simple precautions will help you stay safe.

Swarms typically occur from late October to December, but can also occur later into summer, and even autumn. They can move day and night and are typically most active from mid-morning to late afternoon. Night migration often begins around dusk, with swarms carried by favourable winds and weather systems.

If you encounter a locust swarm, stop in a safe location if you can. If you can't stop safely, slow down, increase your following distance and drive to the conditions.

Risks

- **Reduced visibility:** signs, vehicles, animals and changing road conditions may be hard to see.
- **Slippery roads:** crushed locusts can reduce grip when braking and cornering.
- **Overheating:** can block radiator and air intake, reducing airflow critical for vehicle's cooling system.
- **Windscreen and headlights:** can smear on windscreen and headlights, reducing visibility.
- **Paintwork:** insect remains can mark paintwork if left.

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Before you travel

If you are planning on driving through an area with reported or potential locust activity there are a number of things you can do to prepare your vehicle:

- For older vehicles, stretch soft fine mesh over the grille, secured tightly and breathable so the cooling system still works. Don't cover lights, indicators, number plates or sensors. Avoid this on newer vehicles with sensors built into the grille, as covering them can disable driver assist and crash avoidance features.
- Check windscreen wipers are functioning properly and in good condition, replacing if necessary.
- Fill the washer bottle (add a little detergent), and carry spare fluid, soft cloths and glass cleaner.

If you encounter a swarm

Swarms often take only a few minutes to pass, and it is best to safely stop if you can. If you can't stop safely, slow down gradually and increase your following distance, turn on your headlights and wind all windows up.

To stop safely, slow down before pulling fully off the road, activating your hazard lights and keeping your headlights on. Remain in your car until the swarm passes and avoid using high beams or light bars as these can dazzle oncoming traffic.

Watch your temperature gauge and warning lights. If the engine begins to overheat, or a warning light comes on, consider switching it off while you wait.

After encountering a swarm

After travelling through a swarm, monitor your temperature gauge or any warning lights that appear which may indicate issues with your vehicle's cooling system.

Pull over somewhere safe, ideally a rest area or township, and inspect your vehicle.

- Clean windscreen and headlights with washer fluid and wipers, then water (ideally with light detergent) and a soft cloth. Dry wiping can smear insects and scratch glass.
- Clear insects from the radiator by brushing or lightly rinsing from outside the vehicle. Don't spray into the engine bay, and avoid high pressure air or water, as radiator fins and active grille shutters (common on electric vehicles) are fragile.

Warning: never open the radiator cap or coolant reservoir on a hot engine. Let it fully cool first.

- Check your air filter. If the vehicle feels sluggish or the engine light comes on, have it inspected.
- Wash your vehicle as soon as practical, softening residue first.

For current locust advice, visit the Department of Primary Industries and Regions website at **pir.sa.gov.au/locusts**

We're here to help

If you've broken down and need Road Service, call 13 11 11

For more information on road safety, visit **raa.com.au/roadsafety**

If you have a question about road rules or road safety, call our Road Safety team on **8202 4517** or email **roadsafety@raa.com.au**

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