

BLACK ICE = DANGER



Black ice frequently forms in the late winter and early spring. Black ice is almost invisible to the naked eye and is frequently mistaken for a wet or newly paved road. Black ice can form even when it's not raining or snowing. Melting snow that runs across the road or condensation from overnight dew can freeze forming a thin layer of ice that creates one of the slickest road conditions known to man.

It is because black ice can form so quickly and is so camouflaged on the road that Occupational Safety and Health Administration officials call it **one of the deadliest of all winter driving hazards**.

Here's what to watch out for:

- Pavement that looks dark, wet or like new asphalt.
- Low-lying areas that may have standing water or run off from nearby melting snow banks or puddles.
- Bridges and Underpasses.
- Any road areas which are shaded from the sun.
- Any time the temperature is below 40 degrees F.
- Vehicles that have slid off the road under any of the above conditions.

Here are some things you can do:

- First of all understand that not all cars respond the same to icy, slippery roads. For that reason, knowing how to handle your vehicle and how it responds in various weather conditions is important. AAA recommends that motorists practice slow-speed maneuvers on an empty snow or ice covered parking lot. You should also look through your owner's manual and familiarize yourself with your vehicle's braking system and other features.
- Wear safety belts every time you get into a vehicle. Be sure all children and passengers are secured in proper restraints, too.
- **SLOW DOWN!** - posted speed limits are for ideal travel conditions. Driving at reduced speeds is the best precautionary measure against any misfortune while driving on slippery roads. Allow more time to travel. Resist the temptation to drive faster. Allow extra time not only for the reduced speeds, but for potential problems on the road.
- When the roads are wet or look wet, watch the vehicle in front of you. If it is not leaving tracks or its wheels are not "throwing" water, it is probably black ice and not just wet
- Look well ahead to compensate for the greater distances required when driving on slippery surfaces, focus your attention as far ahead as possible-at least 20 to 30 seconds.
- Drive with your head lights on. This will turn on your tail lights and allow others to see you almost twice as far away. Being visible will give others time to avoid hitting you.
- Be especially leery when driving your car into shaded areas and slow your vehicle down when you encounter such areas.
- Avoid driving while fatigued.
- Maintain more space. Increase your margin of safety. Don't tailgate! Maintain a minimum of 8 to 10 seconds in following distance.
- Anticipate problems. On slick surfaces, any abrupt maneuver will increase the probability of losing vehicle control. Skids can best be avoided by anticipating lane changes, turns and curves, slowing down in advance, and by making smooth, precise movements of the steering wheel.

- Use chains in deep snow and on icy surfaces. Drive at slower speeds to avoid damage to the tires and vehicle.
- Do not use cruise control. Winter driving requires you to be in full control.
- Steer with smooth and precise movements. Changing lanes too quickly and jerky steering while braking or accelerating can cause skidding.

Here are some braking tips should you find yourself on black ice:

1) Braking without anti-lock brakes: Use the heel-and-toe method. Keep your heel on the floor and use your toes to press the brake pedal firmly just short of locking up the wheels. If the wheels lock, release the pressure on the pedal, and press again in the same way. Repeat this until you come to a full stop.

2) Braking with anti-lock brakes: Apply the brakes. Do not remove your foot from the brake pedal or pump the brakes. The ABS should keep the brakes from locking while allowing you to steer as you continue to slow the vehicle down.

In both cases, if your vehicle begins to skid, remember to steer in the direction of the skid. You may also find it advantageous to put your transmission in neutral while trying to stop on black ice.