

THE DANGERS OF BLACK ICE

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WEST VIRGINIA - Thousands of injuries and fatalities occur every year from accidents on snowy or icy roads. Many drivers are unaware of a common culprit in many of these crashes - black ice.

Black ice is a transparent glaze that forms without bubbles, allowing it to easily blend into the surface of the road. Black ice is most likely to form when there is a sudden temperature drop, such as in the early morning and evening hours. Common problem areas are bridges, overpasses and shaded areas of the road. These areas have much colder surfaces that rapidly freeze when air moisture makes contact - especially if they're near lakes or rivers.

Following these simple tips may keep you and your vehicle safe on icy roads:

How to react when encountering black ice

- **Avoid making sudden moves** or turning the wheel. Smoothly lift your foot off the accelerator and glide across the ice in a straight line until you find traction.
- **If possible, slowly shift to a lower gear** for added control.
- **Brake wisely.** If you begin to skid, firmly press on your brakes to activate the anti-lock brake system (ABS). If you don't have ABS, pump the brakes gently.
- **Avoid spinout.** If your front end is sliding, steer in the opposite direction of the skid; if the back end is sliding, steer in the same direction.



- **Look toward where you want to go.** Avoid looking where you think you might crash - you might inadvertently veer the car in that direction.

Learn possible warning signs of black ice

Black ice looks a lot like wet blacktop. Other indicators include:

- Absence of water spray on seemingly wet roads
- Cars suddenly swerving or skidding
- Brake lights ahead
- Car or tire tracks in a ditch
- Shiny surface next to a dull black

Switching out your standard tires to winter tires once the temperatures start to drop can also help. If your vehicle is regularly exposed to driving in snowy and icy conditions, the grip and handling provided by weather-specific tires will be better than all-season tires. And, always remember to slow down when road conditions exist for an increased possibility of black ice.