



BLACK ICE AVOIDANCE

Winter driving is tough enough without the worry of black ice. Roads covered in snow are challenging, but on most drives we can know what we are dealing with. Black ice, however, is invisible and often appears where it is least expected.

Black ice is not, as the name might suggest, actually black. Although called black, it is its transparency that permits it to blend into the road pavement no matter the type, whether asphalt, concrete or other. It forms when light rain or fog encounters a road surface whose temperature is at or below freezing. Black ice can form suddenly, so it is important to know how to prepare for, detect and handle this type of condition.

Black Ice Avoidance

Risk Management

To help avoid accidents involving black ice, consider these tips:

When can black ice form?

1. The air temperature need not be at or below 32 degrees; only the ground temperature must be at or below freezing.
2. Black ice is more likely to form during rain, fog, and mist in cold weather, when the ground is cold and there is moisture.
3. Black ice can form at any time, but tends to form most in the early morning and evening.
4. Bridges and overpasses ice over before roads do because they do not have the benefit of being surrounded by insulating soil, which can trap warmth. They are entirely exposed to the ambient temperature.
5. Black ice can form at tunnel entrances when there is a water source nearby, such as runoff. Because tunnel interiors are not lit by sun, black ice can form on the pavement within the tunnel if there is a source of water.
6. Black ice can form in the shadows of buildings if the ground temperature is at or below freezing.
7. Black ice can also form when roads are wet, but the temperature suddenly drops.

What are some signs of black ice?

1. Though the environment is wet, no water sprays up from the tires of nearby vehicles.
2. If the pavement shows signs of darker and duller color than other parts of road, there may be black ice.
3. If it is misting or raining, the back of the vehicle mirrors will start to freeze with no notable signs of water dripping off them.

What not to do?

1. Do not brake hard. If there is a concern that black ice exists, slow down and gently apply brakes before approaching an icy patch. Lift the foot off of the accelerator and glide over the ice before braking and accelerating again.
2. Don't make any sudden movement, such as turning or changing lanes, which could cause the vehicle to skid.
3. Do not tailgate. Safe following distance is essential to avoiding collisions under black ice conditions.
4. Avoid the use of cruise control in icy conditions.

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What to do?

1. Evaluate the weather before starting to drive. Understand road conditions before the vehicle moves.
2. Increase the following distance from vehicles ahead. Allow for reaction time and plenty of gentle braking to stop or maneuver safely.
3. Downshift to a lower gear before coming upon black ice.
4. Keep the steering wheel straight. If the vehicle starts to slide, turn the steering wheel into the direction of the skid.
5. Evaluate the tires and make sure the tire tread is in good condition. Have the tires and brakes evaluated prior to the winter season and maintain proper tire pressure.
6. Start out slowly.
7. Use the car thermometer only as a gauge of determining temperature and the risk for black ice, as it might not always be accurate.
8. Wear your seat belt.
9. Drive with low beam headlights even in the daytime to help make your vehicle more visible.
10. Listen to the news and weather forecasts. It's a good way to hear of icy conditions or even accidents that could indicate icy roads.
11. Communicate internally with management and drivers to discuss the weather and road conditions.

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