

Safety Alert OF THE MONTH

February 2010

PLEASE PASS THIS ON TO PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS IN BC'S FOREST INDUSTRY

Black ice - dangerous for everyone

Black ice can send even the most experienced driver sliding on what seems like a dry road. The road looks bare, so the driver sees no reason, literally, to avoid normal driving speeds.

Black ice is nearly invisible. It develops as a sheet on road surfaces when snow melts and freezes again, or when rain or sleet freezes on the pavement.

When should you keep an eye out for black ice?

Just because you can't see black ice, some conditions should make you careful:

- Temperatures just above or below freezing.
- A dark or dull appearance to the pavement.
- Road surface in shade, or where the sun hasn't hit yet.
- Bridges, overpasses and underpasses.
- Damp areas where the road follows a lakeshore or riverbank.

Naturally, you should also take care anywhere you've encountered black ice in the past.

Other warning signs you can keep in mind

Check for ice on windshield wipers or side mirrors, on road signs and on trees or fences along the road. If ice forms in places like those, it may also be on the road surface in front of you.

Even if those off-road indicators are ice-free, you're not necessarily in the clear. You may want to check for black ice by gently wiggling your steering or braking lightly to test the road surface.

A few ways to protect yourself

Black ice is a winter hazard that four-wheel drive cannot overcome. You need to be just as careful as someone in a rear-wheel drive vehicle, especially when braking.

Allow more room to stop, and keep a safe distance from other drivers. To stop your vehicle safely on icy roads, always allow 8-10 seconds between you and the vehicle in front of you.

If you approach a patch of ice, brake before reaching it, not after. Using your brakes on ice could throw you into a skid. Remember; do not use cruise control in icy conditions.

Black ice is a serious threat unlike any other road hazard. If your pre-work hazard assessment identifies black ice as a hazardous condition, your best corrective action may be to not drive at all.

For more winter driving safety tips check our winter safety page at www.bcforestsafesafe.org/winter_safety.

