



# Black Ice and the Freeze-Melt-Refreeze Cycle

During the winter months, temperatures outside can fluctuate causing snow to melt and then refreeze. This process, (the freeze-melt-refreeze cycle) often results in a thin layer of ice on walkways and roadways – commonly referred to as “black ice.”

The presence of black ice creates unsafe walking conditions, since sidewalks and other walkways can be covered with clear ice that looks dark gray – like a wet sidewalk. This can be hazardous and is a huge threat to slip, trip and fall safety.

Similarly, black ice can result in hazardous driving conditions, since the ice is virtually transparent. Driving on black ice is particularly dangerous because the roadway can simply appear wet, so drivers may not recognize the slippery conditions until it's too late.

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## When and Where to Expect It

Black ice typically forms at night or in the early morning when temperatures are at their lowest and the sun isn't present to warm the roads. During the day, this hazard tends to form particularly on areas of the road not touched by sunlight, such as tree-lined streets, tunnels or less-travelled routes.

When you're traveling, be sure to monitor the outside temperature to determine the potential for black ice and be especially mindful of bridges. Because bridges are surrounded by circulating open air, they cool faster than other roadways, causing black ice to form here first.

Common black ice areas at places of employment include:

- Outside areas around buildings
- Around downspouts and parking lot drains
- In between vehicles in parking lots

## Black Ice Safety Tips

To combat black ice, maintenance and other personnel need to be vigilant about monitoring walking surfaces during periods of temperature fluctuations. Proper salting and surface treatment practices should be followed to help get rid of any ice areas that could cause injuries.

If you encounter black ice while driving, remain calm. In general, it's best to do as little as possible while allowing your car to pass over the ice. Do not hit the brakes and try to keep the steering wheel straight. If you feel the rear of your car sliding left or right, turn the steering wheel slightly in the same direction. Turning the wheel in the opposite direction could result in skidding or spinning out.

Remember, while black ice can be a scary part of winter weather, taking the above steps can keep you and your employees safer this winter.

