



MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: First Frost, Black Ice, Bridges Freeze First

Overnight freezes are coming. Even a little frozen moisture on the road can create a VERY dangerous situation. Icy and snowy road surfaces were present in 150 crashes in Maine the past three Octobers and more than 1,300 during the past three Novembers.

The Maine DOT provides the following information about black ice:

- Black ice is a thin, nearly invisible coating of ice on the pavement. You may not see it at all. It may just look like a damp or wet spot.
- Black ice often forms shortly before dawn, but can form any time the roads are wet due to rain, mist or fog conditions, or when moisture in the air settles onto cold pavement and freezes.
- Bridges and overpasses are susceptible to icing and it is true that bridges may freeze before roadways because cold air circulates both above and beneath the bridge surface.

Colder temperatures are becoming more common overnight. It's not too early to think about the problem of ice on Maine roads. Black ice is a particular concern this time of year.

The Maine DOT reminds you to drive carefully in cold temperatures, maintain a safe speed and always wear your seatbelt. If you suspect ice:

- **SLOW DOWN.**
- Reduce speed before downhill sections and shift into a lower gear.
- Maintain a proper following distance. When the road is slippery, maintain a following distance of at least four seconds.
- If you do not have ABS brakes and your wheels lock, briefly ease off the brakes, then reapply them to maintain control. If you do have ABS brakes, maintain constant pressure on the brake pedal.
- When the roads are slippery, turn off your cruise control. You don't want unnecessary power to the wheels when the roads are slippery.



- Remember that 4-wheel drive may provide better starting traction, but does not help you to stop quicker.
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Black ice can cause sudden loss of control of your vehicle. The Maine DOT offers the following tips for handling a skid:

- Ease off the accelerator and do not brake suddenly. If you have ABS brakes, maintain constant pressure on the brake.
- If the rear of the vehicle is skidding right, steer smoothly to the right, and if the rear of the vehicle is skidding left, steer smoothly to the left.
- Be careful not to over-steer, especially in tall vehicles like SUV's which may be susceptible to rollover.
- Keep your eye on nearby traffic and your surroundings.
- Look to the direction you want to go because hand-eye reaction does work!

Be a Road Model: Adjust your driving in slippery weather, be prepared for black ice, know how to handle your car in a skid, and always wear your safety belt.