Weekly Safety Tip

Winter Weather Driving

SAFETY TIPS

Winter Weather Driving

Safety Council OF NORTHWEST OHIO

Be Aware of Black Ice

*Don't get caught off guard, because **not all ice is as visible** as it is in the left side photo compared to the accident photo on the right.*

Black ice can form on ground surfaces due to snow melting and refreezing, so **temperatures don't have to be below freezing for black ice to occur.**

Black ice is not just a concern for drivers.
Pedestrians can encounter black ice in parking lots and on sidewalks. Walk defensively to avoid slips, trips and falls as the temperature drops.

Black ice is a dangerous wintertime hazard because the icy road may not always be visible to the driver. Melted snow or ice that refreezes may still look deceivingly like a dry road. Again, temperatures don't have to be below freezing for black ice to develop. It can occur if temperatures are near the freezing mark--or even a few degrees above it.

While a shiny road surface indicates an obviously wet or icy road, a road covered with **black ice** will look a little different… Keep an eye out for pavement that is slightly darker and a little duller looking than the rest of the road surface, which may indicate that **black ice** is present. Because it is so difficult to detect, a driver may not realize there is an icy road surface until their car begins to slide.

Here are some tips on how to drive on black ice:

- As soon as you begin to slide on black ice, **take your foot off the gas pedal**.
- **Don't slam on the brakes** because you can lose control and slide even more.
- **Tap the brake pedal lightly instead of pushing down hard**.
- **Look for trouble spots ahead**.
    - **Black ice is most commonly found on roads that run around bodies of water** (such as lake and rivers), in tunnels and in shady or rural areas.
    - **Bridges and overpasses are also common spots for black ice to form**.
- **Leave plenty of space between your car and the other cars** on the road.
- **Stay well behind the car in front of you** -- at least a couple of hundred feet or 8 – 10 seconds.
- If you begin to skid, **turn the wheel in the direction of the skid**, which should help get you back on the right track.
- **Don't think you're invincible** just because you drive a truck or a big SUV - sports utility vehicle.
  4-wheel drive vehicles have no advantage over regular cars when it comes to driving on black ice.
- **Drive with your low beam headlights on even if it is daytime**, which will make you more visible to other drivers.
- **Make sure your tires provide you with good traction,** by checking that tires are neither over nor under-inflated and have sufficient tread, BEFORE you set out to drive in inclement winter weather.
- Be sure to **wear your seatbelt**.

Winter driving is always unpredictable, so be prepared for the unexpected and stay safe by remaining vigilant to your own well-being and that of any passengers you may have with you in the vehicle.

Dave Varwig, CSP-retired for **SCNWO – Safety Council of Northwest Ohio**

Weekly Safety Share

Does Cold Weather Cause Colds

A HEALTH MOMENT

Does Cold Weather Cause Colds?

Wrapping up warm won't save you from a sniffle and cough, unfortunately.

"You need to wrap up or you'll catch a cold!"

Most people have probably heard some variation of that parental plea while growing up, or have even given such advice to their own children.

But ***contrary to popular belief, cold weather itself does not directly cause the common cold.***

Why, then, do colds seem more frequent when it's cold outside? It's because ***the common cold is caused by viruses, such as rhinoviruses, not exposure to chilly conditions.***

When it's colder, the weather can contribute to the spread of these viruses, and during colder seasons, people tend to spend more time indoors creating an environment where viruses can be easily passed on.

Also, the dry air in colder weather may affect the respiratory tract, potentially making individuals more susceptible to infections.

All of these might explain why we feel the common cold is more prevalent when the temperatures dip, but it's not being cold that's the culprit.

My health tip to all of you is to make sure that the air in your home is properly humidified.
In the winter, keep it between 30-40%, while in the summer it should be around 40-50%, depending on the outside temperature. You want to feel cool in the summer and warm in the winter and humidity plays a crucial part in the level of comfort in your home and as you now know, taking the necessary steps to not catch a cold!

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