

## Safety Focus | Driving in Rain Ice or Snow

Driving in rain, ice or snow is one of the realities of living and working in winter. For professional drivers, ever-changing winter conditions add challenges to those faced with when roads are in good condition. As a professional driver, you must anticipate and be prepared to encounter the three most common winter elements, rain, black ice, and snow. How can a driver minimize risk when faced with slippery surfaces that may or may not be visible?

A driver's first line of defense is **knowledge**. Find out about the weather before leaving. While en route, listen to the radio for current information about the weather and road conditions. Stay alert for changing road conditions by watching the actions of other vehicles. Noticing problems encountered by other vehicles may provide that split-second of extra time to react safely.

When the temperature hovers around freezing and it rains, conditions are favorable for one of a driver's worst enemies: black ice. Black ice is difficult to spot. Prime spots for black ice to form include intersections, ramps, bridges or shady areas. A few ways to identify when black ice may be present include:

- Ice on mirrors and wiper blades – if ice is present the road most likely will be icy.
- Glaze present on the surfaces of road markers and guard rails.
- A different feel to the steering wheel.
- A smoother sound to the tires.
- A lack of spray from other vehicles.

Minimize risk when driving in ice and snow by using defensive driving skills. When driving in rain, black ice, or snow-covered pavement, do not use the cruise control or engine brake.

- Adjust Speed to Conditions
  - Traction = Control - 80% of normal traction is lost when driving in these conditions.
  - Lower Speed = Traction = Control.
- On packed snow, reduce the speed by half (ex: from 55 mph to about 27 mph)
- On icy surfaces, reduce speed by two-thirds (ex: from 55 mph to about 18 mph)
  - Take curves at slower speeds and do not brake while in curves.
- Maintain a Safe Distance
  - An adequate following distance lets you smooth out your driving. It helps to spot traffic tie-ups and allows for more gradual lane changes. Remember, it is the space ahead that you have the most control.
- Watch for snowplows, as well as salt and sand trucks and give them plenty of room. The snowplow operator's field of vision is restricted. Maintain a safe distance and watch for sudden

stops or turns.

- Tire Chains – There are areas of the country that require chains be installed for making it over mountain passes or keeping control of the vehicle.
  - Ensure the vehicle has the correct number of tire chains that are in good condition.
  - Tire chains may be required to improve traction, move the rig and allow for a safe stop.
  - Know how to put the chains on before ending up in a snow and ice situation.

Minimize the risk by using defensive driving techniques. Do not put yourself and others in a dangerous situation.

***Safety begins with you... Make a difference***