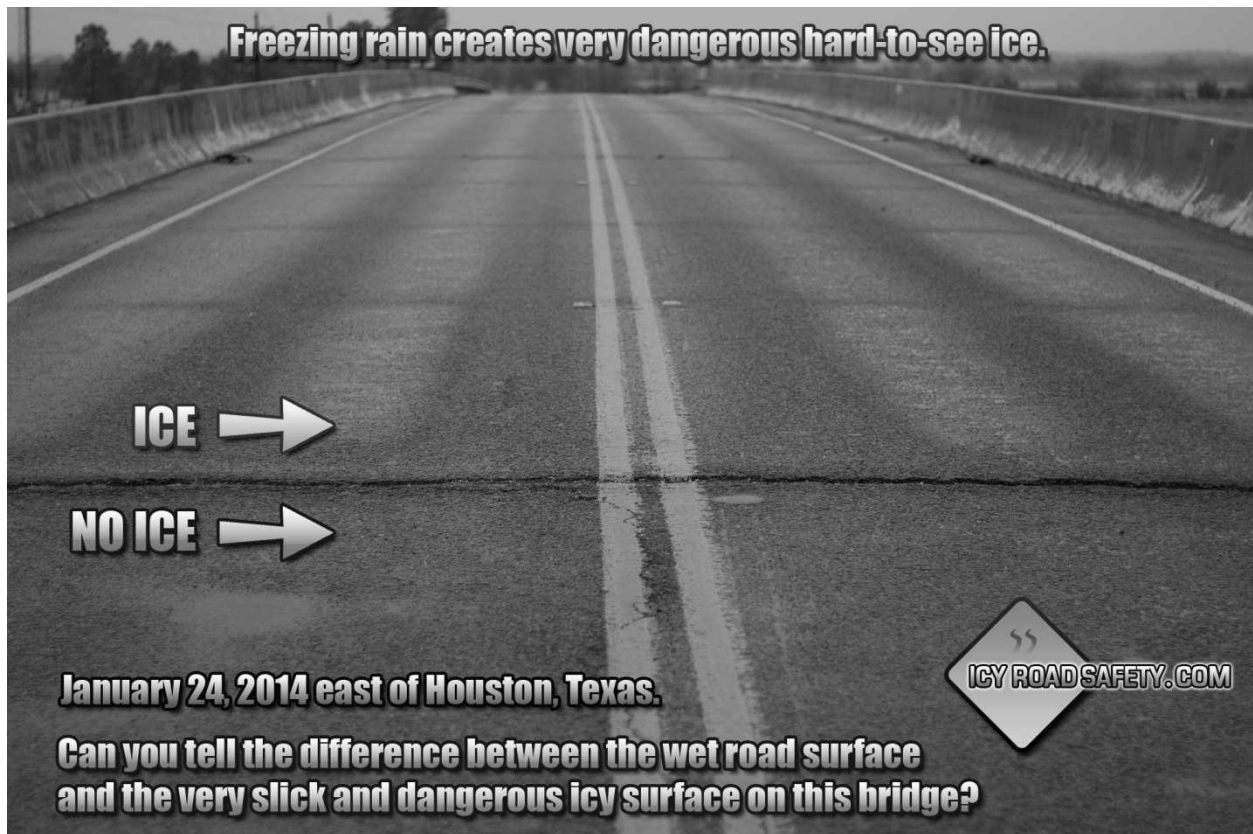


Winter Weather Travel Safety and Preparedness

Living in Kansas you may think that tornadoes pose the greatest risk to your safety from Kansas weather. However, the greatest risk to your safety actually comes from driving in snow and ice during the winter season. We're not talking about the traditional blanket of snow that you can see. The true road ice hazard is subtle and intermittent icing due to light winter precipitation, events that suffer from a lack of obvious visual cues and public awareness (see image below). It is these conditions that cause the biggest percentage of deaths and injuries and it doesn't take much to make roads icy enough for you to lose control!



Although numbers are largely underreported, here in Kansas it is suspected that at least 15 people lose their lives in automobile accidents where ice and snow played a role and that number may be much higher. By comparison, tornadoes kill around 2 people each year in Kansas and injure far fewer.

So what can you do to lower your risk when driving on ice and snow?



1. **Know what to expect on your trip and plan accordingly.** If you know you need to travel through especially bad wintery conditions, be sure to check the weather forecast along your trip by visiting www.weather.gov. Visit [Kansas Dept. of Transportation website](#) to access information about your road conditions including webcams.
2. **Slow down and relax.** This is the most important rule to driving in bad conditions of any kind. And we're not just talking about speed — you want to do everything more slowly and more lightly than you normally would. Hitting your gas pedal, slamming your breaks or cranking your wheel too quickly is a surefire way to lose traction on an icy or wet road.
3. **If you start sliding, turn slightly into the skid and pump your breaks.** Once you're already sliding, your tires have lost traction with the road. It seems counterintuitive, but in order to avoid a spinout you need to turn slightly into the skid, slowly let of the gas and start pumping the breaks. Yanking the wheel in the other direction and locking the brakes will stop your tires from turning, but you'll lose all hope of regaining traction with the road surface.
4. **Know when to quit.** Sometimes road conditions are simply too dangerous to drive in. If you can't see or you keep losing control, pull over. Never push your luck if you're unsure. It's not worth it to drive if you're jeopardizing yourself, your passengers or other drivers on the road.



Even the smartest and safest drivers get into accidents. That's why it's crucial to be prepared for the possibility of any kind of collision or accident that could leave you and your passengers stranded on the side of a cold and possibly dangerous road.

The first step is to build an emergency kit and place it in the trunk of your car.

Inside, you will want to include common car safety items like jumper cables, a flashlight and a roadside visibility kit of either reflectors or flares. If you are stranded, a small shovel and bag of sand are must-haves. Here's a full list of supplies you may want to include in your kit: A list can also be found at [Emergency supplies kit](#)

- Tools: jack, lug wrench, shovel
- Non-clumping kitty litter, sand or de-icer
- Flares, reflectors and flags
- Extra warm clothes, boots, hat and gloves
- Ice scraper and snow brush
- Cell phone and car adapter
- Rechargeable flashlight
- First aid kit
- Matches or lighter
- Battery jumper cables
- Extra food and water
- Blanket/sleeping bags
- Pocket knife

Points to remember:

- **Wear your seat belt!** Even though wearing your seat belt should already be a no-brainer at all times, during the winter it's even more critical. An alarming number of road ice fatalities occur with minor accidents where the vehicle occupants were not wearing seat belts.
- **Take it slow!** *You don't have the skill to drive at normal speeds on icy roads.* High speeds make it easy to lose control on ice and snow. Slowing down to below 45mph when icy roads are a threat is one of the best ways to avoid an accident.
- **Pay Attention!** Put your mobile device away and focus on the road with both hands on the steering wheel!
- **Know what to expect on your trip and plan accordingly.** If you need to travel through wintery conditions, be sure to check the weather forecast along your trip by visiting www.weather.gov. Visit [Kansas Dept. of Transportation website](#) to access information about your road conditions including webcams.

By remembering these few important points we hope that you can help keep yourself, your family and fellow drivers safe this winter season. For more information on Winter Safety visit <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/winter/index.shtml>