



# UNITED STATES ARMY ALASKA



## DRIVING ON BLACK ICE

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**SAFETY BULLETIN**

Winter is here, and driving on snow or ice covered roads is unavoidable for all Alaskan residents. All drivers must adjust their driving techniques to deal with the winter weather conditions. You can't maintain speeds and following distances the same in the winter as you do in the summer.

### *Know The Signs, Know What's Right, Do What's Right.*

- 1. BLACK ICE:** Black ice forms at temperatures at or just above 32-degrees Fahrenheit. Almost invisible to the naked eye, a thin layer of water turns into ice causing extremely dangerous, slippery driving conditions. Certain areas of roadways, for lack of direct sunlight, are more hazardous than others. Use extra caution when driving in shaded areas or on bridges and overpasses.
- 2. KNOW YOUR VEHICLE:** Not all vehicles respond the same to icy conditions. Knowing how to handle your vehicle and how it responds in various weather conditions is important. Practice slow speed maneuvers on an empty snow or ice covered parking lot. You should also review the owner's manual and familiarize yourself with your vehicle's braking system and tire traction.
- 3. FRONT WHEEL DRIVE VEHICLES:** Front wheel drive vehicles handle better than rear wheel drive on slippery roads because the weight of the engine is on the drive wheels, which helps to improve your traction.
- 4. REAR WHEEL DRIVE:** Because there is less weight on the rear wheels of your vehicle, these vehicles tend to slide from side to side during turns on icy roads. Cars and light duty truck owners can place bags of sand in the bed of the truck or trunk to help balance the weight and distribute it equally.
- 5. KNOW YOUR BRAKES:** Your owner's manual will provide information about your braking system. Not all braking systems are the same. Find out which type of brakes your vehicle uses and then follow the manual.
- 6. DISTANCE FACTOR:** The most important thing to remember when driving on slick roads is that you must travel, steer and brake more slowly than usual. The distance needed to stop on ice can be three times as long as that needed to brake under normal driving conditions. This means you should keep at least three times the normal distance from the vehicle directly in front of you.

**Engaged Leadership Saves Lives**