



Touring Tip: Don't Slip-Slide-Away in Cold Weather

As temperatures drop in the Fall and Winter seasons, the likelihood of a rider losing traction increases. Here are some of the road hazards to watch for in low temperatures:

- **Wet Leaves:** Leaves gathering on the pavement in curves are especially hazardous when they're wet. I recently had a slip on dry leaves, obscured in shadows, which put my stomach in my throat, but fortunately didn't cause a spill.
- **Pine Needles:** Pine trees shed their needles, which also can be very slippery on pavement.
- **Black Ice:** It's called "black ice," because the ice is transparent and often not distinguishable from the blacktop under it. Be especially cautious when riding in sub-freezing temperatures.
- **Railroad Crossings:** Some railroad crossings have wooden beams around and between the rails. These become slick as ice when they're wet. I went down at one such crossing on a bicycle, before I even realized it. It's extremely important that any such crossing be made at a 90-degree angle to the rails.
- **Bridges:** Because pavement on bridges is more exposed to the elements than pavement on land, which takes longer to freeze, be especially careful riding across bridges in sub-freezing weather.
- **Mud/Gravel:** The chance of mud or gravel being washed out onto pavement is greater in the wetter, colder months.
- **High Humidity/Wet Pavement:** Higher humidity levels can result in wet pavement, particularly near rivers and other bodies of water.
- **Crosswalks:** The plastic strips marking crosswalks and other on-road signage, become exceptionally slippery when wet. Like the wood-ensconced railroad crossings, motor across them at a 90-degree angle and be careful not to put your boots down on them at stop signs and lights. Otherwise, you'll be having a close encounter with the pavement before you know it.
- **Metal Plates:** The metal construction plates often found on city streets under construction also become treacherous when cold and wet. Avoid riding over them in these conditions.
- **Cold Pavement and Tires:** When first heading out for a ride in Fall and Winter months, the combination of cold tires and cold pavement often makes for less traction and, upon executing a quick turn, the rider may low side. Take it easy until your tires warm up.

Awareness of potential traction hazards is the first step in implementing an effective risk mitigation strategy for riding in cold weather. Always ride smart and stay safe.