

# DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

## *media service*

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From Peter Doyle, Exeter 383226, December 21, 2001

## DEVON DRIVERS URGED TO TAKE CARE ON WINTER ROADS

DEVON County Council renewed its advice to drivers today to take extra care on the county's roads this winter. The warning comes in the wake of freezing rain which left many roads covered in black ice this morning.

While fortunately there were no reported accidents on the County Council's road network, Highways Manager Peter Naile said this morning's events illustrated that even on roads which have been salted motorists need to drive with caution.

Alerted by a forecast of freezing temperatures the County Council carried out its full precautionary pre-salt programme between 3 and 4 pm yesterday, covering 45 routes and over 1,500 miles of Devon's most heavily trafficked routes.

**(News Eds. Note:** These routes do not include the M5, A30, A303, A38, A361, A35 and A39 which form part of the national trunk road network and are the responsibility of the Highways Agency. The Agency contracts Mott McDonald, WS Atkins and Connect to look after these routes.)

Mr Naile: "It is vitally important to get salt on to the roads ahead of the freeze and once again the County Council teams achieved that. But unforecasted bands of rains swept across the county from about 4.45 am this morning which then washed the salt away in some areas and generally turned stretches of sub-zero roads into dangerous black ice.

"There were particular problems north and east of Tiverton and some quite specific problems in parts of East Devon where the topography created very localised sub zero conditions.

"Thankfully there were no reported accidents on the network the County Council is responsible for, but this unpredicted change in weather conditions illustrates why we all need to drive with extra caution during the winter."

Councillor David Morrish, Devon County Council's Executive Member with responsibility for the Environment said: "It is very important that everyone who intends to drive on Devon's roads over the coming months prepares for winter weather. Devon County Council will do its best to provide warnings and treat main routes to reduce potential dangers, but it is everyone's responsibility to drive carefully having regard to the conditions that exist on roads at the time."

Peter Gimber, Devon County Council's Road Safety Officer added: "Drivers can help by

making sure their vehicles are fit for the challenge of bad weather. Cold starts, the need for lights, heated rear screens and demisters on full blast can quickly overwhelm a battery, especially if the subsequent journey is a short one.

"Clean windows are a must, so a good clean inside and out before setting off is a good habit to develop. Ensuring tyres have plenty of tread and are running at correct pressure can make driving safer all round.

"Cold wet roads offer much less grip than dry warm ones, especially if they are covered in dead leaves, and driving needs to be adjusted to suit the conditions. Stopping distances increase dramatically so even more room is needed up to the car in front. Two wheeled vehicles are particularly vulnerable in windy and slippery conditions and drivers should take extra care when passing them."

### **Notes for News Editors:**

- In 1998 the Highways Agency awarded the contract for the management of its motorway and trunk road network (M5, A30, A303, A38, A361, A35 and A39) to Mott McDonald, WS Atkins and Connect, so Devon County Council no longer looks after these routes in the winter.
- Cllr Morrish can be contacted on 01392 275985.
- Peter Naile can be contacted on 01392 383238.
- Peter Gimber can be contacted on 01392 382118.

Devon County Council spends a considerable amount of time and money trying to reduce the dangers of snow and ice on roads. 32 sensors across the county feed road surface temperatures and other information back to the Control and Information Room at County Hall, which is manned 24 hours a day and is the nerve centre of winter maintenance operations.

When freezing conditions exist county routes are treated with rock salt from a stock of 23,000 tonnes. It is not feasible to treat the entire 7,900 mile road network and many lower category roads will not be treated.

Even treated roads need to be viewed with caution. Although the salt will prevent ice formation or melt the ice if temperatures are not too low, the surface will be wet and very cold so great care must be taken and any signs of warnings of slippery roads, bends or other hazards must be taken seriously.

**Motorists can obtain further advice on winter driving in a free leaflet published by Devon County Council which is available by calling 01392 383191 or on the Devon County Council website at [www.devon.gov.uk](http://www.devon.gov.uk)**

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