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THE SLIPPERIEST ICE

During an ice storm or even during a rain falling on well-trod snow we wonder how ice could ever be so slippery. Pond ice never seems so bad, nor does other ice on sidewalks formed in other ways. Since most of us wear rubbers or arctics in winter when it is raining we must consider slipperiness in its relation to rubber. It is well known that rubbers slide best on smooth wet surfaces and down slopes. Therefore, any condition forming hard smooth ice with wet film on sloping surfaces presents the greatest hazards.

In a recent ice storm, a glaze that was described as the most dangerous in years, and which allowed a loaded bus to turn around three times as it skidded down a hill, was brought on by a light rain on bare streets after a sudden rise of temperature. The streets were so cold that the rain froze solidly onto the pavement, but the air temperature, and, presumably the rain temperature also, being just above freezing, permitted a thin film of water to cover this hard ice.

Rain or thawing water after a cold spell produces similar results on sidewalks or streets, for the water penetrating to the cold surface freezes, while that above remains liquid. Hillside roads may readily become impassable except for those who have creepers, for melt water tends frequently to flow across them, while the slope gives gravity a find chance to start motion after the slightest slip.

On a sunny day, even sand may not help much, for the sand grains, warmed by the sun, quickly sink into the ice, leaving the surface slippery as before. Coal ashes, though dirtier to track around, do better, for they are in part, at least, too thick to heat through so readily or to sink below the surface.

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