



Lawn Sprinklers and Cold Weather Create Road Hazards in Dallas

Written On January 8, 2010 By [Bob Kraft](#)

Dallas is going through the coldest weather in a decade, and we're not handling it very well. Fortunately we've only had a little precipitation, which did cause some problems Thursday morning, but didn't shut down the city as ice storms usually do. We're not going to get above freezing for a couple of days though, and there is potential for other driving hazards. The [Dallas Morning News](#) wrote about this in a recent article. Here are excerpts:

Sprinkler systems and broken water pipes are capable of creating hazards in winter weather, no matter how sunny the skies – as events proved Tuesday morning.

A Richardson police officer suffered minor injuries when his patrol car hit an icy patch caused by overflow from a nearby business's water sprinkler on Audelia Road. The patrol car spun out, hit a curb, a school crossing sign and a utility pole before flipping over.

A few hours later, a driver lost control of his 18-wheeler on a patch of ice on East R.L. Thornton Expressway near Jim Miller Road in Dallas. Before he came to a stop, four other vehicles were involved. Again, there were no major injuries.

And traffic was halted at Mockingbird Lane and Skillman Street when water from a broken main froze, briefly blocking traffic in all directions.

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Such incidents become routine in Dallas in cold weather, and some, such as the water main break, are unavoidable, according to Lt. Scott Bratcher, traffic crash supervisor for the Dallas Police Department.

In some ways, it's an issue peculiar to the Sunbelt.

“One day you have 70 degree weather and people are trying to keep their lawns green, and the next day it's below freezing and they forget to turn their sprinklers off and it gets on the roadways – that happens a lot,” he said.

He advises homeowners and business owners to turn off their sprinklers in frigid weather, and drivers to watch for ice, particularly in curb lanes and under bridges.

The advice will be especially relevant later this week. Temperatures are supposed to be the coldest officially recorded in the area since 1996.

Under the Dallas municipal code, sprinkler systems must be equipped with freeze gauges that will keep the water off in cold weather.

The owner of a sprinkler system can be fined up to \$2,000 if the system creates a hazard to motorists or pedestrians, according to a Dallas Water utilities supervisor.

Cold Weather Tips

- To lower heating bills, set ceiling fans to blow air down. Open curtains during the day to let in sun; close at night to keep out the cold.
- If it's not possible to bring pets indoors, provide them adequate shelter and access to unfrozen water.
- Check on elderly neighbors living alone or people with disabilities.
- If your sprinkler system doesn't have an automatic freeze shut-off, turn off the system. Check for damaged sprinkler heads.

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•Be alert to ice on roadways – even in sunny weather.

SOURCES: Red Cross; Dallas Police Department

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