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South central KDOT crews pretreating some highways

In anticipation of wintry precipitation starting Friday – going into a holiday weekend – Kansas Department of Transportation crews in south central Kansas are pretreating some highways.

They are especially focusing on elevated areas including bridges, where the surface tends to freeze faster.

Pretreatment varies within the region because of varied forecasts from area to area. Around Lyons, for example, a crew has been pretreating with a mix of brine and beet juice. Beet juice is sticky, so it holds the ice-fighting brine to the pavement longer and at lower temperatures. The beet juice looks brown, and it can be washed off vehicles.

As you go farther southeast in south central Kansas, pretreatment might not occur because only rain is expected so far in that area. Rain can wash away pretreatment material.

KDOT supervisors monitor the situations for each storm to determine what will work best. Pretreatment helps crews get ahead of a storm.

Even with pretreatment, motorists should be prepared for possible slick conditions and should follow the safety basics: buckle up, slow down, stay alert and don't venture out if it's not necessary. KDOT asks that motorists stay well behind KDOT trucks plowing snow or putting down treatment materials.

And KDOT asks that motorists please be patient. Clearing highways takes time: Once snowfall or icing begins, it can be difficult to keep up. Trucks can plow a section of highway, and 10 minutes later it's completely covered, looking like a truck hasn't come by for hours. Each plow truck driver has an average of about 40 to 50 lane miles to cover along a route.

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