



## How to Become an Ice Road Trucker

Thanks to reality shows like *Deadliest Catch* and *Ice Road Truckers*, America is in love with dangerous jobs. Sitting on the couch with their hands in a chip bag, many American men are thinking, "I could do that," but what does it really take to get an ice road trucker job? Is it really a job that just anyone can do? In the present article, we will take a look at exactly what it takes to do an ice road trucker's job.



To begin with, the ice road is not really a road at all. Built by spraying thousands of gallons of water, it is a creation that makes shipping supplies to the diamond mines possible. In Canada's frozen tundra, several areas are sprinkled

with varying types of mines. Outside of Yellowknife, for example, there are the Diavik Diamond Mine, Ekati Diamond Mine, Jericho Diamond Mine, and Snap Lake Diamond Mine Project. All of these mines require equipment and supplies to function, not to mention food and water for the workers while they are there.

The ice road is 370 miles long and extends from Yellowknife to the territory of Nunavut. 140 workers who work around the clock in wind chills that reach minus-70 degrees Fahrenheit construct the road. When the job is complete, they will have constructed the longest ice road in the world. The road is 40 inches thick and capable of supporting the 70-ton trucks that will haul supplies to the diamond mines. The road, of course, is unlike any other road, because underneath the sheets of ice is flowing water. One of the challenges of driving over it is to keep the water from breaking through.

It is an ice road trucker's job to get the supplies and equipment through. To do this, a trucker needs nerves of steel and the stamina of a marathon runner. Let's look at the details of ice road trucking.

During the extremely short season of the ice road trucking job, there are 60 days during which to move nearly 10,000 loads in minus-50-degree Fahrenheit temperatures. Reportedly, the truckers drive with one hand on the door handle, prepared to jump should the ice give way and the truck go down. This is a very real problem in the ice road trucking job industry.

Ice breakage, however, is just one of the many perils that face ice road truckers. The three-hundred mile road is desolate, to say the least. There are very few times when a trucker will encounter another truck, and for good reason. As the trucks travel over the ice road, the water beneath flows in two

different directions, the opposing waves coming together just when the trucks do. This can cause a reaction under the ice that could punch through and take both trucks down.

The necessary desolation, meanwhile, makes it extremely perilous if a truck were to break down. There are two major problems with a breakdown. First, a driver is never supposed to idle his truck while stopped on the ice. This is because the constant vibration in one spot can result in the ice giving way. This leads to the second problem, however: Without being able to run his truck, the driver would have no heat in below-freezing temperatures.



The schedule of an ice road trucker job includes many hours, and few of them are for sleep. Once a truck begins its perilous journey over the frozen lakes, it absolutely must not stop until it reaches its destination. When figuring that many destinations are 300-plus miles and the speed limit on the ice road is 35 mph, this equals nearly ten hours one way. Making a round trip will take over 20 hours.

Bad weather is also a constant concern in an ice road trucker job. Near whiteouts do occur and, when they do, can leave a trucker stranded, unable to move or worse — he may even find himself off the road completely. If this happens, there is a better than good chance that truck will break the ice and go down.

With all the dangers and peril that come with an ice road trucker's job, it is amazing that there are any who are willing to do it. And yet, there are not only many doing it but even more who are interested in an ice road trucker job. It could be that the compensation is what brings them out in such large numbers.

In a typical two- to three-month season, the salary for an ice road trucker job will range between \$20,000 and \$90,000. The more experience that a driver has, the more money there is to be made. In addition, most companies have added several insurance packages to sweeten the deal. About half of the



## Trucking Career Feature

companies are also offering varying amounts of life insurance and worker compensation plans to entice more applicants for ice road trucker jobs.

As of today, there are no special training requirements beyond that of the typical commercial driver's license. Moreover, the job market looks strong, as the turnover rate for this high-stress position is quite high. Add to that the fact that Alaska is ranked third in the world for diamond mining, and you have a good picture of a strong and growing job market.

To apply to drive on the ice road featured in the History Channel's new series, you will want to look for work with companies like Nuna Logistics in October of the year preceding

the winter you would like to drive in. Most of the companies do not begin looking for company drivers or owner operators until then, as they are typically unsure of the number of loads they will be contracted for until late fall. It is important to note that while you do not have to be a resident of Canada for this job, you must be cleared to work in the country.

Canada allows work visas from several countries, the United States included. You will want to start the application process early though as the visa can be difficult to obtain. When all your paperwork is in order, though, you will be free to apply to any one of the hundred or so companies that have ice road trucker jobs.

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.