

## Response to crashes – SH8 Mackenzie District

Winter weather conditions in the Mackenzie Basin (SH8) have been extreme over the last two weeks, with acutely cold temperatures (below  $-6^{\circ}$ ) combined with an enduring air temperature inversion layer (meaning it is colder closer to the earth), resulting in significant black ice formation on shaded or sheltered sections of SH8, particularly adjacent to Lake Pukaki. Over that period there have been three serious crash incidents – two buses rolled on Thursday 18 July 2024 near Hayman Road, one truck and trailer unit rolled on Friday 19 July 2024, 10km south of Twizel, and four cars crashed at the intersection of SH8 and SH80 (to Aoraki Mt Cook).

In all cases, the NOC contractor (Downer) responded appropriately to the road conditions by applying grit to affected areas in a timely manner. Application of CMA (road salt) is not effective at temperatures below  $-6^{\circ}$ , so grit is the only option. Regardless of the application of grit, the extremely cold temperatures have resulted in black ice continuing to form, even well into mid-morning.

In response to this unusual situation, NZTA has directed the Contractors in the Mackenzie Basin and on the south of the Lindis Pass to increase the number of crews operating on these stretches of state highway to reduce the time between grit applications, both in the early morning and late afternoon/evening. In addition, 50km/h temporary speed limit (TSL) signs will be deployed in the highest-risk areas to ensure that road-users are aware of the need to reduce speed due to road conditions. These additional measures will be implemented immediately and continue through to the end of August 2024.

The location of high-risk areas, and where TSLs may be deployed, are shown on the map below:

