

Ice Safety

It is that time of year again when we need to be very aware and spread the word regarding ice safety. Whether you're snowmobiling, ice fishing or skating with your family, here are a few things you should know about ice safety before venturing on frozen ponds and rivers. Ice is rarely uniform in thickness. Ice thickness is influenced by water depth and size of the body of water. Currents, tides and moving water can cause ice to be thinner in some areas. Thick ice is not necessarily strong ice. In fact, thick ice often contains layers of snow or water, making it quite weak. Spring ice or ice that has repeatedly frozen and thawed can be especially weak. Snow on top of ice acts as an insulating layer and the ice under it is often thin and weak. A snowfall can insulate, warm up and melt existing ice. Extreme cold can also quickly weaken ice by causing large cracks.

Safe loads for clear solid ice are indicated below. **This information must be used a general guide - keep off the ice if you are not absolutely sure:**

Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines

Load	Minimum Thickness of Ice cm	Minimum Thickness of Ice inches
1 person, walking	5 cm	2"
Group, single file	8 cm	3"
Passenger car (2000 kg)	18 cm	7"
Light truck	20 cm	8"
Heavy truck (7500 kg)	35 cm	14"

Going on Ice

ALWAYS avoid going out on ice at night and never venture on ice alone.

If someone falls through the ice, call 911 immediately. Remember that being a strong swimmer won't help you survive falling through the ice. Cold water can rob the body of the ability to move within seconds, making it very difficult to get out of the water. Knowing what to do on ice can save a life and prevent hypothermia, injury and drowning.

Self-Rescue Steps:

1. Float on your stomach facing the shore.
2. Reach forward onto the ice - do not push down on it.
3. Kick your legs to slowly push your torso onto the ice.
4. Crawl or roll away from the hole.
5. If you can't climb onto the ice, float in the water and call for help loudly and clearly.
6. Get medical help immediately.

Know what to do if you hear the ice crack:

1. Lay down on the ice.
2. Call for help loudly and clearly
3. Crawl or roll back to land.

Assisting someone who has fallen through the ice:

1. Do not attempt to go on the ice.
2. Push or throw a stick, branch, rope or floating aid to the victim
3. It is important to get help fast
4. Call 9-1-1 for expert assistance

Remember reach, throw...but do not go.

Some good links:

Canadian Red Cross - <http://www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=2570&tid=024>

BoatSafe.com - http://www.boatsafe.com/nauticalknowhow/ice_hazard.htm

EngineeringToolbox.com - http://www.engineeringtoolbox.com/ice-thickness-safe-loads-d_1566.html