



ICE SAFETY

Cold Facts About Ice

New ice is usually stronger than old ice. 4” of clear newly-formed ice may support one person on foot, while a foot or more of old, partially-thawed ice may not.

Ice seldom freezes uniformly. It may be a foot thick in one location and only an inch or two a few feet away.

Ice formed over flowing water and currents is often dangerous. This is especially true near streams, bridges and culverts, and bubblers protecting docks.

Snow slows down the freezing process. Snow has an insulating effect that can cause the freezing process to take longer. The extra weight of the snow can also cause the ice to be much weaker.

Fish and Waterfowl can affect the safety of ice. The movement of fish can bring warm water up from the bottom side of the lake. This has opened holes in the ice causing snowmobiles and cars to break through.

General Ice Thickness Guidelines

- 2” or Less - STAY OFF!
- 4” - Ice fishing or other activities on foot
- 5” - Snowmobile or ATV
- 8” - 12” - Car or small pickup
- 12” - 15” - Medium Truck

These guidelines are for new, clear, solid ice. Many factors other than thickness can cause ice to be unsafe. Slush ice is about 50% weaker. Use common sense!

Use the buddy system - IT SAVES LIVES



Traveling on Ice

Check for known thin ice areas with a local resort or bait shop. Test the thickness yourself with an ice chisel, ice auger or even a cordless drill with a long bit.

Refrain from driving on ice whenever possible. If you must drive a vehicle, be prepared to leave it in a hurry - keep windows down, unbuckle your seatbelt and have a simple emergency plan of action you have discussed with your passengers.

Don't "overdrive" your lights. Even at 30 mph it can take much longer to stop on ice than your headlights shine. Many fatal accidents occur because the speed was too fast to stop when the headlights illuminated a hole in the ice

Wear a life vest under your winter gear. Or wear a new floatation snowmobile suit. It is also a good idea to carry a pair of ice picks that can be home made or purchased from most sporting goods stores.

DO NOT WEAR A FLOATATION DEVICE WHEN TRAVELING ACROSS ICE IN AN ECLOSED VEHICLE!

What If You Fall In?



First, try not to panic. This may be easier said than done, unless you have worked out a survival plan in advance. Read through these steps so you can be prepared.

Don't remove your winter clothing. Heavy clothes won't drag you down, but instead can trap warm air to provide warmth and floatation. This is especially true with a snowmobile suit.

Turn toward the direction you came. This ice held you once already and it is probably the strongest ice around you.

Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface. This is where a pair of nails, screwdrivers or ice picks come in handy in providing extra traction to pull yourself up and onto the ice.

Kick your feet and dig in with your ice picks to work your way back onto solid ice. You may have to lift yourself up with your elbows to help drain water and provide leverage to get onto the ice.

Lie flat on the ice once you are out and roll away from the hole. This will help to keep your weight spread out and may help prevent you from breaking through again.

Get to a warm, dry, sheltered area and re-warm yourself immediately. Seek medical attention if needed. The shock of cold blood to your heart can cause a heart attack and death.

What If Someone Else Falls In?

First, call 911 for help! Make sure somebody knows there is an emergency in case you fall in too.

Resist the urge to run up to the edge of the hole. This would most likely result in you falling in the water.

Preach, Reach, Throw, Row, Go

PREACH - Shout to the victim to encourage them to fight to survive and reassure them that help is on the way

REACH - If you can safely reach the victim from shore, extend an object such as a rope, ladder, or jumper cables to the victim. If the person starts to pull you in, release your grip on the object, and start over.

THROW - Toss one end of a rope or something that will float to the victim. Have them tie it around themselves before they are too weakened by the cold.

ROW - Find a light boat to push across the ice ahead of you. Push it to the edge of the hole, get into the boat and pull the victim over the bow.

GO - A non-professional should not go out onto the ice to perform a rescue unless all other basic rescue techniques have been ruled out.



What If Your Vehicle Falls In?

If your car or truck plunges through the ice, the best time to escape is before it sinks, not after. It will stay afloat for a few seconds to several minutes depending on the air-tightness of the vehicle.

While the car is still afloat, the best escape hatches are the side windows since the doors may be held shut by the water pressure. If the windows are blocked try to push out the front windshield or the rear window with your feet or shoulder.

A vehicle with its engine in front will sink at a sharp angle and may land on its roof if the water is 15 feet or deeper.

When the car is completely filled, the doors may be a little easier to open unless they are blocked by mud and silt. Remember at this point the car may be upside down! Add darkness and the near freezing temperatures and your chances to escape greatly diminish.

In 2008 there were 39 incidents of ice emergencies reported to the NY state forest rangers alone