

Can you Trust the Ice?

Ice Myths and Cold Realities

Incident Statistics:

- ❑ Each winter in Canada someone dies in an ice-related incident, and countless others fall through the ice and have a close brush with death.
- ❑ Out of 32 drowning deaths in Alberta and the Northwest Territories in 2009, three occurred on or around the ice.

Ice Rescue

- ❑ **First, call 911.** Be careful; you can fall through the ice too.
- ❑ Anyone on or near the weak ice should slowly lie down.
- ❑ Use a long reaching assist, i.e. rope, stick or ladder.
- ❑ Tell the person to kick and slowly ease out of the water.
- ❑ Have them crawl or roll away from the broken ice.
- ❑ Make sure you are both far enough away from the hole before you stand up.
- ❑ Help them into dry clothes and treat for hypothermia.



For more information, contact:



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Myth: *Ice forms at the same thickness everywhere on a body of water.*

Reality: Ice is rarely uniform in thickness. It can be a foot thick in one place and only an inch thick just 10 feet away.

Myth: *Thick ice is strong.*

Reality: Even thick ice may be weak, especially if it has frozen and thawed repeatedly or if it contains layers of snow or water.

Myth: *For the same thickness, all ice has the same strength.*

Reality: Different types of ice have different strengths for the same thickness. Clear blue, black or green ice is the strongest. 4" (10 cm) of this ice should safely support 1 or 2 people. White or opaque ice should be at least twice as thick (8" or 20 cm) to safely support the same number of people.

Myth: *Snow on top of ice makes it stronger and freeze faster.*

Reality: Snow acts like an insulating blanket. The ice under the snow will be thinner and weaker. A new snowfall can also insulate, warm-up and melt existing ice. Ice with layers of snow may not support anyone.

Ice Safety Tips:

- ❑ Skate on designated ponds.
- ❑ Measure ice thickness in several places.
- ❑ Stay off river ice.

Myth: *Extreme cold means safe, thick ice.*

Reality: A cold snap with very cold temperatures quickly weakens ice and can cause large cracks within half a day. A warm spell can take several days to weaken the ice.

Myth: *If you know where you are going and what the ice is like, it is safe to travel across the ice at night.*

Reality: It is particularly dangerous to travel on ice at night. Ice conditions change daily and you will generally not be able to see hazards or warning signs at night.

Myth: *The better you swim, the better your chances of rescuing yourself if you fall through ice.*

Reality: After as little as five minutes, cold water begins to rob you of your ability to move your limbs. This makes it very difficult for you to get out of the water, no matter how well you can swim!



- ❑ Take proper safety equipment.
- ❑ Avoid traveling on ice at night.
- ❑ If you drive on ice, have an escape plan.
- ❑ Wear lifejacket/PFD over your coat.