



KIDS WHO PLAY ON FROZEN RIVERS ARE WALKING ON THIN ICE

There are few winter scenes more inviting than a river topped with layers of bumpy, marbled ice – and few winter scenes more dangerous to unsuspecting children.

One out of every 12 Canadians who drowns each year plunges to death through unsafe ice. In almost half of these cases, individuals drown while simply walking, playing, or fishing.

Children shouldn't play on frozen rivers and lakes. The crust that forms on top of a river is unstable due to water swirling beneath it. Lake ice is most fragile in frozen areas around an open patch and along the shore. Avoid rivers and lake shorelines, where even ice that looks solid is weak.

The way to keep kids safe on ice is to keep them off it. If they do play on ice, it should be with a buddy and under adult supervision. As parents, remember if you are not 'within arms reach' you have gone too far.

If a child slips through thin ice, do not approach the hole; the same thing may happen to you. First call for help, then help from a distance with encouragement and a long assist: a rope, ladder, hockey stick, etc. If there are lifejackets or buoyant objects around, rescuers should use them to protect themselves in the event they fall in. When the victim grabs the assist, pull gently to ease him or her out of the water. Then, tell the child to crawl along the ice with feet spread. Help the child to safety as soon as you can approach, and remove wet clothing as soon as dry garments are available. Remember, reach or throw but don't go!

The Lifesaving Society is Canada's lifeguarding expert. The Society is a national, charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education campaign and aquatic safety management services. Each year in Nova Scotia the Society certifies over 8,000 people in its lifesaving, lifeguarding, and leadership courses.

Recommended Minimum Ice Thickness for New Clear Hard Ice.

No ice is without some risk. Be sure to measure clear hard ice in several places.

3" (7 cm) or less STAY OFF!

4" (10 cm)
ice fishing
walking
cross country skiing

5" (12 cm)
one vehicle - snowmobile or ATV

8 - 12" (20-30 cm)
one vehicle - car or small pick-up

12 - 15" (30-38 cm)
one vehicle - medium truck

LIFESAVING SOCIETY
The Lifeguarding Experts

ONTARIO SNOWMOBILE SAFETY COMMITTEE

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10 ICE SMART SAFETY TIPS

Ice is never 100% safe: the best advice is to stay off it. If you do venture onto the ice, remember:

1. Check the weather and avoid ice-related activities on warm or stormy days.
2. Check ice conditions with knowledgeable local individuals (e.g. city staff, police, snowmobile clubs, etc.). Obey all ice warning signs.
3. Avoid vehicle travel on ice whenever possible, especially if you have been drinking alcohol. Remember that even one drink can dull your senses, slow your reaction time and impair your judgement.
4. Keep away from unfamiliar paths or unknown ice, and avoid traveling on ice at night.
5. Never go onto the ice alone. A buddy may be able to rescue you or go for help if you get into difficulty.
6. Before you leave shore, inform someone of your destination and expected time of return.
7. A thermal protection buoyant suit will increase your chances of survival if you do go through the ice. If you do not have one, wear a lifejacket/personal flotation device (PFD) over an ordinary snowmobile suit or layered winter clothing.
8. Assemble a small personal safety kit, no larger than the size of a man's wallet, to carry on your person. The kit should include a lighter, waterproof matches, or magnesium fire starter, pocketknife, compass and whistle.
9. In addition to the above safety equipment, you should also carry ice picks, an ice staff and rope. A cellular phone could also help save your life.
10. Insist that children, if they do play on ice, are always under adult supervision. Children not within arm's reach have ventured too far.

MYTH:

IF THE WEATHER HAS BEEN COLD, THE ICE MUST BE SOLID.

REALITY:

OTHER FACTORS THAT ARE LARGELY INDEPENDENT OF AIR TEMPERATURE (E.G. WIND, A LAYER OF SNOW ON THE ICE, CURRENTS, AND FLUCUATING WATER LEVELS) CAN WEAKEN ICE AND MAKE IT UNABLE TO BEAR WEIGHT. A SUDDEN DROP IN AIR TEMPERATURE, WHICH IS ACTUALLY MORE DANGEROUS THAN A SUDDEN RISE, CAN CREATE CRACKS IN THE ICE.
