

Ice safety: If in doubt, don't go out

Ice is constantly changing in response to weather and water conditions. That's why ice is never 100 per cent safe.

The OPP is not in a position to declare ice conditions safe, but we can urge the public to practice proper ice safety.

Almost all recreational activities involve some risk. The OPP encourages everyone to assess and manage the risks of their recreational activities so they can enjoy the outdoors.

Ice safety and weight-bearing properties of ice can be affected by many factors, including: thickness, currents, age of the ice, pressure cracks and snow cover. Ice conditions can change dramatically.

Children should not play on or near ice covered bodies of water unless supervised by an experienced, safety-conscious adult who is familiar with local conditions and currents.

Proper use of safety equipment can reduce the risks of traveling over ice covered bodies of water. Possibilities include: wearing of survival suits, carrying picks (used to grip ice to pull yourself out of the water), and carrying a rescue rope.

For information from the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs go to their website at www.ofsc.on.ca

For further information on ice safety from the Royal Lifesaving Society, visit:
<http://www.lifesaving.ca/main.php?lang=english&cat=watersafety&sub=ice>

Safety tips if you are considering venturing out on ice-covered water:

? Check the weather. Avoid ice-related activities on warm or stormy days.

? Check ice conditions. The Lifesaving Society recommends a minimum ice thickness of 10 cm (4 inches) for a single person to walk, ice fish, or cross-country ski on.

? Avoid vehicle travel on ice.

? Never go onto the ice alone. A buddy may be able to rescue you or go for help if need be.

? Wear a thermal protection buoyant suit to increase your chances of survival should you go through the ice.

? Carry ice picks, an ice staff, rope and a cell phone with you.

? Do not drink alcohol. Alcohol impairs judgment and reduces your body's ability to stay warm in cold conditions.

If in doubt, don't go out!