

## Ice Smart Safety Tips!

Bodies of water covered in ice are never 100% safe. Changing water and weather conditions can make what was previously strong ice much thinner and weaker. Use the following tips to keep yourself and others safe:

- Stay off unfamiliar paths and unknown ice.
- Stay off of all ice during the night
- **Never go out on the ice alone! A friend can help you if you get into trouble.**
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return.
- **Stay Sober!** Alcohol and drugs slow you down both mentally and physically.
- Stay off the ice during fall freeze and spring thaw.
- Ice on or near moving water is always unsafe. Stay clear.

## Ice Myths vs. Realities

**Myth:** Snow on a frozen lake or river makes the ice surface stronger.  
**Reality:** Snow acts as an insulating blanket that hinders ice formation and growth.

**Myth:** Waterlogged clothing pulls you down in the water and can make you drown.  
**Reality:** Air trapped in your clothing will keep you afloat temporarily. However, once your clothes are soaked with water they will be heavier, making moving and swimming more difficult.

**Myth:** Thick ice is stronger than thin ice.  
**Reality:** Even thick ice may be weak if it is "rotten" or contains layers of water. Rotten ice has frozen and thawed repeatedly, making it potentially fragile even when it appears solid.

**Myth:** If the weather has been cold, the ice must be solid and safe.  
**Reality:** Other factors besides air temperature (e.g. wind speed, layers of snow, currents in the water) can weaken ice and make it unable to bear weight.

## Want More Information?

The Lifesaving Society is a national, charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education, drowning prevention research, safety management services, and lifesaving sport.

The Society establishes aquatic safety standards and consults widely on aquatic safety issues for aquatic facility owners and operators, governments, agencies and the judicial system.

Annually, over 1,500,000 Canadians participate in the Society's training programs. The Society also certifies all of Canada's National Lifeguards.

Each province and territory has a Branch that provides programs and services for their region. Branch listings can be found at [www.lifesaving.ca](http://www.lifesaving.ca).

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# BEING ICE SMART

## The Cold Facts About Ice Safety





# Danger Areas to Watch for When Out on the Ice

## Ice around solid objects

Bridges, docks, piers, logs, rocks and other objects in the water create barriers to the formation of strong ice. Throughout the winter ice around these objects will always be weaker than expected.

## Water or slush

Water or slush on the surface of the ice indicates that either the ice is beginning to melt, or that cracks in the ice are allowing water to flow upwards. Both situations are very dangerous.

## Pressure ridges

Pressure ridges look like giant spiked piles of ice. They form along cracks in the ice when pressure builds up and forces one layer of ice over another. They can hide holes or open water, and can move without warning.

## Holes or cracks

Holes or cracks in ice can indicate that the ice is unstable due to melting or other conditions. Even ice fishing holes can create unstable ice if too many are drilled in one area, or if the ice is thin and weakened by the drilling.

## Heavy snow

Snow acts as an insulating blanket that prevents proper ice formation. In some cases the weight of snow piled up on the ice can crack the ice and create open water areas that are hidden by the snow cover.

## Thin Ice Warning Signs

In some areas, such as winter ice roads, retention ponds, and river skating trails, the safety and thickness of the ice may be tested on a regular basis. When warning signs go up it means the ice has been found to be unsafe. Stay off!

Unsure of how safe the ice is?  
Stay off!

# Ice Safety Supervision

If you are taking children out onto a natural ice surface (lake, pond, river, or stream) use the following list to keep you and them safe:

- Make sure you or another responsible adult checks the thickness of the ice in multiple locations.
- Make sure everyone is wearing a buoyant snowmobile suit (also called a Floater coat) or a lifejacket/PFD.
- Make sure everyone is wearing layers of clothing appropriate to the weather conditions.
- Make sure everyone is carrying a whistle (plastic & pealess), either on their wrist or attached to their Floater coat or lifejacket/PFD.
- Make sure all teens and adults have a personal safety kit and know how to use it!
- Keep small children Within Arms' Reach at all times.
- Wear sunglasses to avoid glare and snow blindness.

## Personal Safety Kit

A personal safety kit should be worn on your person, carried in hand, or stored in a waterproof case inside of your jacket at all times:

- Buoyant snowmobile suit or lifejacket/PFD
- Waterproof matches & lighter
- Cell phone or two-way radio
- Whistle (plastic & pealess)
- Ice staff or walking stick
- Ice picks or ice claws
- Compass & map
- Pocket knife

Source: *Ice The Winter Killer*, pg 87-92

# Get the Training!

If you like being in the great outdoors during winter, you need to be prepared to respond to winter emergencies.

Everyone should earn the **Bronze Medallion** to learn basic rescue skills. If you live, play or work around water and ice then you also need **First Aid & CPR** training. Enroll your family in Lifesaving Society courses so that everyone learns how to be Water Smart before you get in too deep.

Contact your local recreation center or swimming pool for courses for children and adults.

If your winter activities include snowmobiling, contact your local snowmobile club to learn about trail conditions and usage regulations, safe operator training and other important information.



The Lifesaving Society has been educating Canadians since awarding its first Bronze Medallion in 1896.

