

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **POND, ICE SAFETY, AND FROSTBITE**

Winter is here and for many that means sledding, ice skating, snowmobile riding, ice fishing, skiing, and other activities that may put you at risk for frostbite and in contact with areas of iced over water. In our rural area, many people have ponds on their property that provide them with great outdoor activities. Here is some information to keep you safe.

### **ICE SAFETY**

- Test and inspect the ice thickness by drilling holes and taking measurements every 10 feet each time you go out on the ice. Ice does not develop evenly and is affected by temperature, snow, sleet, rain, water depth, the age of the ice, and quality of the water.
- Know that good ice is new, thick, and clear or with a blue/green tint to it.
- Never be on ice less than 4 inches thick.
- Wear a personal floatation device (life jacket) for warmth and safety.
- Dress warmly in layers--especially around the head, neck, chest, sides, and groin as these are areas of high heat loss. Good gloves are a must to protect the hands and fingers.
- Carry ice claws or ice picks and know how to rescue yourself or someone else.
- Go out with a partner: the buddy system is always the safest.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages; have hot drinks and energy foods with you.
- Have extra clothing, blankets, and a first-aid kit for emergencies.
- Don't take vehicles onto the ice.
- Don't build fires on the ice.
- The weakest ice is in the center and along the edge of the water.
- Snow can cover open areas of water.
- Wet cracks and slushy, darker areas indicate weaker areas of ice.
- Never assume the ice is thick enough!

### **WHAT IS THICK ENOUGH?**

The measurements below are for inches of new, clear or blue ice, not old or deteriorating ice. If you are not sure, stay off the ice.

- 0-3 inches: stay off!
- 4-5 inches for skating and fishing (250 lbs. maximum).
- 6-7 inches for snowmobiles or ATV (1,100 lbs. maximum).
- 8-11 inches for light truck or car (3,527 maximum).
- 12-14 inches for medium truck (7,937 lbs. maximum).
- For any load that will be on the ice for more than two hours, multiply the load weight by 2.
- Spread the weight load over a large area.
- When ice fishing, keep 10 to 20 feet between people and even greater distances from vehicles to spread out the weight.

## **FROSTBITE**

Even if you don't fall through the ice, you are at risk for frostbite due to prolonged exposure to cold temperatures. Frostbite is the freezing of body tissue which cuts off blood circulation to the affected area. Most commonly affected areas are ears, nose, cheeks, hands, and feet. Frostbite can affect the skin in as little as 20 minutes. Wind and humidity shorten the time it takes for frostbite to occur.

## **PREVENTING FROSTBITE**

- Dress in warm layers with a waterproof outer layer. Wear boots scarves, hats, and gloves.
- Do not get wet, and remove wet clothing immediately.
- Drink plenty of water and eat regularly.
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, and caffeine.

## **SYMPTOMS OF FROSTBITE**

- A feeling of pins and needles tingling in area.
- Numbness, loss of sensation.
- Area may feel hard to the touch.
- Blisters may appear on the skin.
- Skin may look white, pale, and waxy.
- Absence of pain in the affected area.
- Slurred speech or memory loss.

## **TREATMENT FOR FROSTBITE**

- Get the person indoors.
- Get immediate medical attention.
- **Never rub** affected areas as it causes damage to frozen tissue.
- Warm affected area slowly.
- Do not place direct heat on the area.
- Immerse affected area in warm water or wrap in warm compress (100° F) for 20 to 30 minutes. Do not let the victim control the temperature of water or heat source as they cannot feel if it is too hot and may be burned.
- Keep affected area elevated.
- Wrap area in warm blankets once the affected skin turns pink or reddish.
- Do not let the affected area be exposed to the cold again.
- Avoid drinking alcoholic beverages.