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What if you fall in?

What should you do? **First, try not to panic.** This may be easier said than done, unless you have worked out a survival plan in advance. Read through these steps so that you can be prepared.



1. **Don't remove your winter clothing.** Heavy clothes won't drag you down, but instead can trap air to provide warmth and flotation. This is especially true with a snowmobile suit.
2. **Turn toward the direction you came.** That's probably the strongest ice.
3. **Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface.** This is where a pair of nails, sharpened screwdrivers or ice picks come in handy in providing the extra traction you need to pull yourself up onto the ice.
4. **Kick your feet and dig in your ice picks to work your way back onto the solid ice.** If your clothes have trapped a lot of water, you may have to lift yourself partially out of the water on your elbows to let the water drain before starting forward.
5. **Lie flat on the ice once you are out and roll away from the hole** to keep your weight spread out. This may help prevent you from breaking through again.
6. **Get to a warm, dry, sheltered area** and re-warm yourself immediately. In moderate to severe cases of cold water hypothermia, you must seek medical attention. Cold blood trapped in your extremities can come rushing back to your heart after you begin to re-warm. The shock of the chilled blood may cause ventricular fibrillation leading to a heart attack and death!

Check out the [Using Ice Picks for Self Rescue](#)  (WMV 4.6 MB) video to learn more.

For more information, contact the Minnesota DNR for our free ice safety and hypothermia prevention brochures. Metro (651) 296-6157, or toll free in Greater Minnesota (888) 646-6367.

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