
ICE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND ICE SAFETY TIPS

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency has issued information regarding safety precautions to be taken on our frozen lakes, rivers and ponds. The MEMA director Don Boyce has said, "Before we experience a tragedy that is unfortunately too common this time of year, it is important that we remind everyone particularly children, of the dangers of unsafe ice. Lakes, ponds, streams and river throughout the commonwealth have begun to freeze over, however, the temperature continues to fluctuate above and below freezing, making ice conditions very uncertain. People may be a bit impatient to venture out on the ice for skating, hockey, ice fishing and other winter sports. We highly recommend the use of recreational skating areas. It is very important to exercise precaution and common sense."

The best **ICE STRENGTH** would be the clear, blue ice on lakes and ponds. Reduce strength values 15% for clear blue, river ice. Slush and snow (white) ice is only one-half the strength of blue ice and can be very treacherous. "Honeycombed" Ice, which occurs in the spring or during major winter thaws as the ice is melting, is the most dangerous ice; therefore, best avoided unless the person is certain there is a safe layer of solid ice beneath the honeycombed surface.

General Ice Thickness and Strength (clear, blue, lake ice)	
2" or less 4"	Stay Off !!! Individual Ice Fishing or other activities on foot
5" to 7"	800 lbs. to 1000 lbs
8" to 12"	1000 lbs to 2000 lbs

The person, while dressed in layers of cloths, seal cell phone in clear waterproof plastic bag, possible "ice pins" around their neck and exterior life jacket, should also be aware that many lakes and ponds within Bellingham contain spring holes and other areas of current that may create deceptively dangerous thin spots in areas that are otherwise safe. Always use caution, and don't venture out onto unfamiliar waters without checking ice thickness frequently.

Consequently, due to the uncertainty of ice conditions that can change hourly and the dangers presented, safety departments within Bellingham will **not** endorse the ice safety of lakes, ponds, streams or rivers. The strength and thickness of ice should be known before any activity takes place.

What if you, a companion or pet fall through the ice?

As with any emergency, don't panic! If you fall through the ice, briefly call for help. It doesn't take long for the cold water to start slowing your physical and mental functions, so you must act quickly. Air will remain trapped in your clothes for a short time aiding your buoyancy. Kick your legs while grasping for firm ice. Try to pull your body up using "ice pins" that should hanging around your neck. Once your torso is on firm ice, roll towards thicker ice. This will better distribute your weight. Remember that ice you have previously walked on should be the safest. After your reach safe ice, don't waste precious time because you need to warm up quickly to prevent hypothermia. Go to the nearest fishing shanty, warm car, or home. Know your location and Call the Bellingham Emergency number of 911 from a land line or the cell number of 508 966 1212; then, advise the dispatcher of your name, your location, what happened and your condition. A reminder to have your cell phone's settings set to broadcast GPS location on "ALL" calls while in the outdoors.

If a companion falls through the ice remember the phrase "**Reach – Throw – Go**". If you are unable to **reach** your friend from shore, **throw** him or her a rope, jumper cables, tree branch or other object. If this does not work, **go** for help before you also become a victim. Get medical assistance for the victim immediately.

When walking on or near ice, keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice do not attempt to rescue the pet, go for help. Well meaning pet owners can too easily become rescue victims when trying to assist their pets.

For other ice safety tips and winter weather preparedness, check the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency website.

References: Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsagencylanding&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Public+Safety+Agencies&L2=Massachusetts+Emergency+Management+Agency&sid=Eeops>

Mass Wildlife Angler Education Program http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/recreation/ice_safety.htm

