



Make Sure Ice Is Safe For Fishing

by
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Ice fishing is underway at northern New England ponds and lakes that have ice thick enough to support anglers. However, even with the frigid weather earlier this week at press time, the ice has not been safe for fishing and skating in many areas.

For example, as of Wednesday, there were no Rhode Island authorities declaring safe ice in state owned lakes and ponds. The Mass Wildlife field office in Westborough suggested contacting local police departments for safe ice conditions in your area.

So before you put yourself, family and friends at risk, check with local cities and towns to find out if ice on a local pond or lake is safe.

Ice must have a uniform thickness of at least six inches before it is considered safe by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

It generally takes at least five to seven consecutive days of temperatures in the low 20's.

Safe ice is determined by a number of factors. First, you can't judge ice conditions by appearance or thickness alone; many other factors like water depth, size of the waterbody, water chemistry, currents, snow cover, age of ice, and local weather conditions impacting ice strength.

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife offers these ice tips:

- **New ice is stronger than old ice.** Four inches of clear, newly formed ice may support one person on foot, while a foot or more of old, partially thawed ice may not.
- **Ice doesn't freeze uniformly.** Continue to check ice conditions frequently as you venture out onto it.
- **Ice formed over flowing water** and currents is often more dangerous. Avoid traveling onto ice-bound rivers and streams, as the currents make ice thickness unpredictable. Many lakes and ponds may contain spring holes and other areas of currents that can create deceptively dangerous thin spots.

What to do if you fall through the ice?

- Don't panic: Call for help if there are people nearby.

- Don't remove winter clothing: Air trapped in your clothes can provide warmth and help you float.
- Turn the direction you came from: Ice you previously walked on should be the safest.
- Place your hands and arms on an unbroken surface and kick your legs: If you have ice picks or a pair of nails, use them to pull yourself up onto the ice while kicking.
- Lie flat and roll away: Once your torso is on firm ice, roll toward thicker ice to distribute your weight.
- Find shelter and get warm: Change out of wet clothing and find warm, dry coverings. If you are in a remote area, get to or start a campfire. Otherwise, get to a car or house. Seek medical advice from your physician on medical attention.



Where there is safe ice up north, anglers are catching largemouth bass, pickerel and yellow perch.

If someone else falls in
Remember the phrase "Preach-Reach-Throw-Go."

Preach: Call 911 if you can. Shout to the victim to reassure them help is on the way.

Reach: If you can safely reach them from shore, extend an object like a rope, jumper cables, tree branch, or ladder to them.

Throw: Toss one end of a rope or something that will float

to the victim.

Go: If the situation is too dangerous for you to perform a rescue, call 911 or go to find help. Untrained rescuers can become victims themselves.

If a pet falls in: Do not attempt to rescue them, go find help. Well-meaning pet owners can easily become victims themselves. Remember to always keep pets leashed while walking on, or near, ice.

Call local cities and towns for safe ice conditions in your area.

The Rhode Island Division of Parks and Recreation provides information about Lincoln Woods State Park in Lincoln, Meshanticut State Park in Cranston, and Goddard Memorial State Park in Warwick on its 24-hour Ice Information telephone line, 401.667-6222.

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