



# NEWS RELEASE

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
South Central Region**  
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**CONTACT: Tyler Strelow, Conservation Warden, Fitchburg: 273-5619**  
**SUBJECT: *DNR OFFERS ICE SAFETY TIPS***

**FITCHBURG** – The recent bout of unseasonably warm weather has prompted the Department of Natural Resources to again caution anglers about following safety tips as they venture onto the ice this winter.

Knowing when it is safe to step out onto the ice, how to travel on ice and what to do should the ice break is as important as the rudiments of fishing itself.

“Most law enforcement folks will tell you that because it can be tricky there is no such thing as safe ice,” said DNR conservation warden Tyler Strelow, Fitchburg. “And although a lake or river is frozen, does not mean it can be safely traveled.”

Warden Strelow offers the following safety tips to anglers and others:

- ✓ Clear, solid ice at least two inches thick is usually sufficient to hold a single person walking on foot. For safety’s sake, wait until the ice is at least three inches thick and go with a friend. Keep at least 50 feet of distance between each other. Ice fishing with several friends and gear requires at least four inches of ice, and snowmobiles and ATV’s five inches.
- ✓ Ice will generally be thicker near shore and get thinner as one ventures out. Check ice thickness with an ice spud or auger starting from a few feet from shore and every 10 to 20 feet as one goes towards the middle of the waterway.
- ✓ Lake ice is generally stronger than river ice. Springs, lake inlets and outlets, and channels can alter ice thickness.
- ✓ Before heading out onto early or newly formed ice, check with a local bait shop, resort owner, or outdoors store regarding ice thickness or known thin spots.
- ✓ Whether alone or with a friend on early ice, always carry a couple of large sharpened nails and a length of rope in an easily accessible pocket. The nails or commercially bought ice grabbers can help a person pull themselves out of the water and on to more solid ice. The rope can be thrown to another person for rescue.

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The following counties are in the South Central Region: Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Green, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk.

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- ✓ Proper clothing can increase chances of survival should a person break through the ice. A snowmobile type suit, if it is zipped, can and will trap air and slow the body's heat loss. Once filled with water, however, insulated suits become very heavy and will hinder rescue. Newer model snowmobile suits have flotation material built in and anyone traversing ice should consider purchasing one of these suits. On early ice it is advised to wear a personal flotation device.
- ✓ Refrain from driving on ice whenever possible. Travel in a vehicle, especially early or late in the season, is an accident waiting to happen.
- ✓ When driving on ice be prepared to leave the vehicle in a hurry. Unbuckle the seatbelt and have a simple plan of action in case of ice break through. Anglers may want to leave a window open for an easy exit.
- ✓ Often vehicles will establish roads from shore to the current fishing hotspots. Repeated vehicle use may cause the ice to weaken. The ice roads may not always be the safest routes.
- ✓ When using a gas or liquid heater to warm an ice shack or tent make sure it is properly ventilated with at least two openings, one at the top and one at the bottom of the structure. Any flame eats oxygen so proper ventilation is required.

“Common sense is the greatest ally in preventing ice related accidents,” said warden Strelow, “and that includes checking ice conditions and preparing oneself before venturing out.”

Five minutes of checking ice from shore, and systematic checks while going out on the ice can make the difference between an enjoyable winter experience and a tragedy, he added.