



POND & LAKE ICE SAFETY

Smithfield's Lakes and Ponds During the Winter Months

Smithfield's ponds can be enjoyable throughout the year however there is **always a risk and danger** when venturing onto outdoor frozen ponds for skating and ice fishing activities. **Remember, many variables can impact whether or not the ice on a pond's surface is "safe" for use.** Please review these tips on ice safety before making the decision to venture onto outdoor ice.

Know what "safe" ice is...

- **Recognize ice quality.**

Ice should be clear or bluish-black. Its depth and thickness can vary from one area of a pond to another. Thinner ice is found near stumps and other debris or near channels where water flows. Keep away from these areas as well as areas which appear to be slushy and near spots that appear to be "black holes" under a thin layer of ice.

- **Skate or ice fish in groups of three or more.**

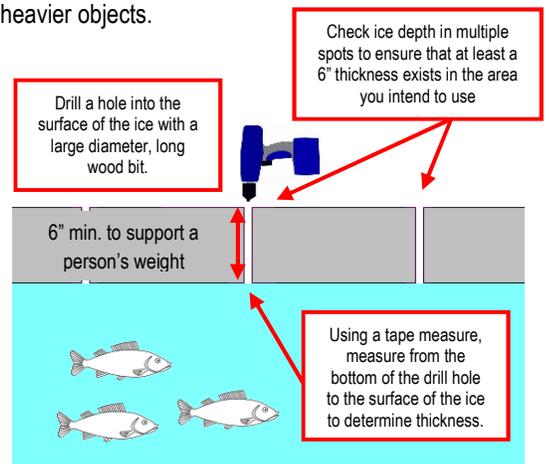
Never skate or fish alone. A safe number of people in a skating or ice fishing group is at least three people. If an emergency occurs, one person should stay with the victim while the other goes to meet and guide emergency responders to the victim's location.

- **Use ponds and lakes that are commonly known and accessible.**

Avoid skating or fishing on hidden ponds or located in wooded areas. These remote spots can delay rescuers from finding you in an emergency. Always be aware of the location where you are skating or fishing so you may accurately describe it to emergency dispatchers.

Measuring ice thickness

It can usually take 2 to 3 weeks of freezing temperatures to form a "safe" layer of ice on pond surfaces. Ice needs be at least 6 inches thick to support the weight of a person and even thicker for heavier objects.



What to do if someone falls through the ice...

- **First and foremost, DIAL 9-1-1 IMMEDIATELY.**

Tell the 9-1-1 dispatcher that a person (or the number of people) has fallen through the ice and your location.

- **Talk to the victim.**

Reassure the victim that 9-1-1 has been called and help is on the way. Keep them talking and focused while waiting for help.

- **Reach for the victim.**

Never approach a victim who has fallen through the ice. Only reach for a victim at a safe distance using an available ladder, pole or other object.

- **Keep a throw rope available.**

Rope is an important safety tool and one that is recommended to take along when using outdoor ice. Always keep a brightly colored piece of rope made of a material that floats (at least 50 – 75 foot in length) when using outdoor ice. Keep your rescue rope in a bag or plastic jug so it can be thrown to a person in distress from a safe distance away. Practice throwing rescue rope before an emergency occurs so you are familiar with this important lifesaving skill. Never wrap a rescue rope around yourself so to prevent being pulled into the water by a frantic victim.

