



SNOWMOBILERS: LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT ICE

Canadians know one way to enjoy winter is by skimming from one side of an icy lake to another on a snowmobile. What they don't know is how to tell if the ice will take them there. One out of every 12 Canadians who drowns each year plunges to death through ice. Most victims are males between 15 and 44 years of age and more than half of these incidents involve snowmobiles.

Myth: Once ice is frozen, it is the same thickness in all parts of the lake or river. **Reality:** Ice is rarely uniform in thickness. It can be a foot thick in one spot while ten feet away it may only be an inch thick.

Myth: Thick ice is strong. **Reality:** Even thick ice may be weak if it is 'rotten' or contains water layers. Rotten ice has frozen and thawed repeatedly making it potentially fragile even when it appears solid.

Myth: Snow atop a frozen lake makes it stronger. **Reality:** Snow acts like an insulating blanket, warming and eroding ice.

How do you tell if the ice will hold your vehicle? There is no sure answer, but follow these guidelines if you plan to travel across ice on a snowmobile or other vehicle:

- Stay on the trails!** Routes across ice are unpredictable given variances in ice thickness.
- Stay off the ice during spring thaw!** Late winter and early spring weather lead to big changes in ice thickness. Ice that was strong yesterday may be at the breaking point today.
- Avoid parking vehicles on ice.** Cars and other vehicles parked together may increase the load beyond the breaking point causing the ice to buckle and break.
- Avoid travelling at night** or when it is snowing heavily as it is more difficult to see thin ice and holes in the ice.
- Wear a buoyant snowmobile suit.** The material provides insulation from cold water and it will help bring you to the surface if you fall through.
- Travel with a buddy.** A buddy can go for help or help you if you get into difficulty.

Recommended Minimum Ice Thickness for New Clear Hard Ice.

No ice is without some risk. Be sure to measure clear hard ice in several places.

7 cm (3") or less STAY OFF!!	10 cm (4")	12 cm (5")	20-30 cm (8 - 12")	30-38 cm (12 - 15")
ice fishing, walking, cross country skiing	one vehicle: snowmobile or ATV	one vehicle: car or small pick-up	one vehicle: medium truck	

AdventureSmart www.adventuresmart.ca

LIFESAVING SOCIETY® The Lifeguarding Experts

The Lifesaving Society is Canada's lifeguarding expert. The Society is a national, charitable organization working to prevent drowning & water-related injury through its training programs, Water Smart® public education campaign and aquatic safety management services. Each year in BC and the Yukon the Society certifies over 20,000 people in lifesaving, lifeguarding, and leadership courses.

For more information about the Lifesaving Society see www.lifesaving.bc.ca.

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10 ICE SMART SAFETY TIPS

Ice is never 100% safe: the best advice is to stay off it. If you do venture onto the ice, remember:

1. Check the weather and avoid ice-related activities on warm or stormy days.
2. Check ice conditions with knowledgeable local individuals (e.g. city staff, police, snowmobile clubs, etc.). Obey all ice warning signs.
3. Avoid vehicle travel on ice whenever possible, especially if you have been drinking alcohol. Remember that even one drink can dull your senses, slow your reaction time and impair your judgement.
4. Keep away from unfamiliar paths or unknown ice, and avoid traveling on ice at night.
5. Never go onto the ice alone. A buddy may be able to rescue you or go for help if you get into difficulty.
6. Before you leave shore, inform someone of your destination and expected time of return.
7. A thermal protection buoyant suit will increase your chances of survival if you do go through the ice. If you do not have one, wear a lifejacket/personal flotation device (PFD) over an ordinary snowmobile suit or layered winter clothing.
8. Assemble a small personal safety kit, no larger than the size of a man's wallet, to carry on your person. The kit should include a lighter, waterproof matches, or magnesium fire starter, pocketknife, compass and whistle.
9. In addition to the above safety equipment, you should also carry ice picks, an ice staff and rope. A cellular phone could also help save your life.
10. Insist that children, if they do play on ice, are always under adult supervision. Children not within arm's reach have ventured too far.

DID YOU KNOW?

IF YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO THE COLD, IT IS A GOOD SIGN IF YOU ARE SHIVERING. SHIVERING IS THE BODY'S NATURAL PROCESS FOR REWARMING THE BLOOD. THE ABSENCE OF SHIVERING IS A SIGN OF SEVERE HYPOTHERMIA OR DEPLETION OF ENERGY STORES WITHIN THE BODY.

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