

Ice Safety

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Ice and cold water safety is important and concerns many of us who participate in outdoor activities near water. Too many residents are injured from falling through ice and exposure to cold water.

Skaters and children playing near bodies of water fall through the ice; boaters and canoeists overturn their crafts; unleashed pets run onto the ice and people chase after them. Educating residents on the dangers of being around ice and cold water is vital to staying safe.

Ice Dangers

- Never go onto the ice alone. A friend may be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through
- Always keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice, do not attempt to rescue your pet. Go for help.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice. As ice ages, the bond between the crystals decays, making it weaker, even if melting has not occurred.
- Ice formed over flowing water (rivers or lakes containing a large number of springs) is weaker.
- Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be one foot thick in one spot, and be only one inch thick ten feet away.
- Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it strong, but can also insulate it to keep it from freezing. Snow can also hide cracks, weak, or open ice.

Safe Ice Thickness*

Ice Thickness	Permissible Load	Ice Thickness	Permissible Load
3 inches.....	Single Person on Foot	12 inches.....	Heavy truck (8 ton-gross)
4 inches.....	Group in single file	15 inches.....	10 tons
7 ½ inches...	Passenger Car (2-ton gross)	20 inches.....	25 tons
8 inches.....	Light Truck (2 ½-ton gross)	30 inches.....	70 tons
10 inches..	Medium truck (3 ½-ton gross)	36 inches.....	110 tons

***Solid, clear, blue/black pond and lake ice.**

Slush ice has only half the strength of blue ice. The strength value of river ice is 15 percent less.

Cold Water Dangers

- Cold water is dangerous below 70 degrees.
- Cold water robs the body of heat 25-30 times faster than air.
- Safety experts estimate that half of all drowning victims die from the fatal effects of hypothermia, not from water in the lungs.

For more information, call Daniel L. Schmidt or Captain I William Moreland, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, 703-246-3801 and TTY: 711. Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of disability in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided upon request.

Contact:

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