



Town of Wareham, Massachusetts

Ice & Cold Water Safety

Wareham Harbormaster Department

ICE & COLD WATER SAFETY

To help ensure a safe winter and holiday season we would like to offer some guidelines to remember when using the waterways.

Each winter, many residents are injured from exposure in cold water incidents. Skaters and ice fishermen fall through the ice; Boaters and canoeists overturn their crafts.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard, each year there are over 7,000 drownings and 20,000 near-drownings in the United States. Over half of these incidents occur in cold water, (less than 70 degrees F.).

How thick is “safe” ice?

Ice on moving water in harbors, rivers, streams and brooks is never safe. The thickness of ice on ponds and lakes depends upon water currents or springs, depth and natural objects such as tree stumps or rocks. Daily changes in temperature cause the ice to expand and contract, which affects its strength. Because of these factors, no one can declare the ice to be absolutely “safe”.

Safety Tips

- Never assume the ice is safe.
- Always wear your lifejacket when boating.
- Children should always have adult supervision
- Wear bright colored clothing.
- Always tell someone where you will be.
- Stay away from ice on salt water.
- Never skate or go ice fishing alone.
- Know the body of water, nearby street, and where the nearest location to go for help is.
- If you hear ice cracking immediately lie down to distribute your weight.
- Never go out onto the ice after animals or toys.

- Never use ice for a shortcut.

If you witness someone falling through the ice, never attempt a rescue by yourself! Many times would-be rescuers become victims themselves. Dial 911 and notify the proper authorities. Be sure to give the exact location and an account of the incident.

You cannot determine the strength of the ice simply by its looks and thickness!