



MISSOULA RURAL

FIRE DISTRICT

January 22, 2024

News Release

Safety on Ice and frozen Bodies of Water

Winter recreation often brings people on or near frozen bodies of water. Frozen lakes, streams, and ponds often provide fun recreation opportunities, but they can be dangerous if certain safety precautions are not taken. Ice found on bodies of water raises the risk of danger due to multiple variables. There is no way to judge the strength and safety of ice by looking at it or by the temperature of the day. Fluctuating temperatures, exposure to sunlight, and other factors affect the consistency and strength of the ice. It can be several inches thick in one spot and only an inch thick a few feet away. Be especially wary of ice covered with snow. Snow can hide cracks and weaknesses in open ice. Parents should educate their children about the danger of going out on a frozen body of water, including never following a friend or a pet into these potential danger zones.

Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) would like to offer some safety tips for your winter recreation activities stay to safe and fun.

Basic tips

- Parents should always supervise children skating or playing on or near ice. Educate them on the risks of playing on ice, and outfit them with life jackets. Never leave children alone on or near ice-covered bodies of water.
- Adults should prepare before going on ice. Wait to walk out on ice until there is a minimum of four inches of clear, solid ice measured from multiple locations. Start measurements in an area where the water is shallow. If the thickness in the shallow area is less than three inches, do not walk on the ice.
- Take someone with you, wear a life jacket, and bring safety equipment, like ice awls or spikes.
- Always keep your pets on a leash near frozen bodies of water. If a pet falls through the ice, do not attempt to rescue your pet, call 9-1-1 or go for help.
- Stay clear of white ice. White ice has air and snow within it, making it weaker.
- Stay off river ice. Currents can quickly change the thickness of ice, making it more fragile. Currents are also likely to pull a victim under the ice shelf, greatly reducing the chances of a successful rescue.

If Someone Falls Through Ice

- If you come across someone who has fallen through the ice, don't attempt a rescue yourself. Call 9-1-1 immediately or go for help.
- If the ice did not support the victim's weight, it will not support you. Avoid going on the ice to attempt a rescue, but extend a ladder, rope, jumper cables, or tree branch to the victim along with something that will keep them afloat.
- If the person is rescued from the cold water, before emergency responders arrive, help the victim into dry clothes as soon as possible and move them to a warm location.

If You Fall Through Ice

- Remain calm and try not to panic. The body will undergo cold water shock when suddenly immersed in cold water, and you will experience an increase in heart rate and blood pressure.
- Face the direction you came from and spread your arms out on the unbroken ice. Kick your feet and try to pull yourself onto the ice.
- Once out of the cold water, remain lying on the ice (do not attempt to stand) to keep your weight distributed and avoid breaking through the ice. Roll away from the hole and crawl back to solid land. This helps to keep your weight distributed.

If you have any questions or want more information regarding this news release, please call us at 406-549-6172.

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