

## **Information on Outdoor Winter Safety**

### **Facts**

- Last winter, two people died after falling through the ice.
- Over the last 10 years, 55 people drowned after breaking through thin ice.
- Sixty-five percent of all ice drownings are vehicle related.
- Last winter, 22 people died in snowmobile accidents.
- Last winter, 49 percent of snowmobile deaths were alcohol or drug related.

### **Safe Behavior**

- Never walk on ice less than four inches thick. Don't snowmobile on less than five inches or drive your car on less than eight inches of new, clear ice.
- Warn your children to stay away from ice-covered ponds and streams.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages, especially when snowmobiling. Alcohol causes the body to lose heat more rapidly, even though one may feel warmer after drinking alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid overexertion. Cold weather even without physical exertion, puts an extra strain on the heart. If you add to this the strain of heavy physical activity, such as shoveling snow, pushing an automobile or even walking too fast or too far, you risk damaging your body.
- Watch for frostbite and other symptoms of cold-weather exposure. Frostbite causes loss of feeling and a white or pale appearance in extremities such as fingers, toes, tip of nose and ear lobes. If such symptoms are detected, get medical attention immediately. Do not rub with snow or ice. This does not help the condition and, in fact, will make it worse. The best treatment for frostbite is rewarming the affected tissue.
- Drink plenty of fluids. Dehydration can be a severe problem.
- Keep yourself and your clothes dry. Change wet socks and all other wet clothing as quickly as possible to prevent loss of body heat. Wet clothing loses its insulation value and transmits heat rapidly.
- If paralyzed persons or infants must go outside in severe weather, they should be checked frequently for signs of frostbite.

### **Winter Attire**

- Dress warmly in loose-fitting, layered, lightweight clothing. Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent and natural wool, if possible.
- Wear a hat. More than half of body heat is lost through the top of the head.
- Wear mittens that are snug at the wrist. Mittens offer better protection than, gloves which allow your fingers to cool much faster.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a scarf to help protect lungs from cold air.
- Attempt to keep your feet as dry as possible. Wear wool socks.

#### **Additional Materials Available**

- Ice Safety Info - [www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice)
- Snowmobile safety info - [www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/vehicle/snomobile](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/vehicle/snomobile)

#### **Points of Contact for the public**

- Materials listed above are available from:  
**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Information Center**  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4046  
Phone: 651-296-6157 or 1-888-MINNDNR  
e-mail: [info@dnr.state.mn.us](mailto:info@dnr.state.mn.us)

#### **Points of Contact for the media**

- **Ice Safety:**  
Tim Smalley, Boat and Water Safety Specialist  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4046  
Phone: 651-259-5354
- **Snowmobile Safety:**  
Captain Mike Hammer  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Enforcement  
Education Program Coordinator  
Camp Ripley  
15011 Highway 115  
Little Falls, MN 56345  
Phone: (320) 616-2504