

MINISTRY OF LABOUR
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY BRANCH

Working on Ice Covered Bodies of Water



If in Doubt, Don't Go Out!

Recently there have been several fatalities where workers have fallen through ice while performing their duties and died. The Ministry of Labour recognizes that working on ice-covered bodies of water (lakes and rivers) is a concern for the health and safety of workers in Ontario.

Employers must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of their workers whose duties may take them on ice-covered bodies of water.

Workers must be trained in ice hazard awareness and safe entry techniques, prior to working on ice-covered bodies of water.

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Workers must be aware of ways to prevent or avoid going through the ice-covered bodies of water.

When travelling onto ice-covered lakes or rivers look for existing marked paths, trails or ice roads. These are more likely to have thicker ice conditions.

Learn to recognize potentially poor ice conditions and avoid or leave areas that have;

- Large or multiple cracks
- Air holes
- Near open running water (mouth of a river)

Preventative Measures and Procedures

Ensure that the ice has been tested before travelling out onto the lake or river.

If ice is of unknown thickness or condition, only trained personnel with an appropriate work procedure and rescue plan should carry out ice testing.

Local conditions such as weather, currents and water depths can affect ice thickness. Consult knowledgeable local individuals. White ice has air or snow within it and should be considered suspect. The recommended minimum ice thickness for new clear hard ice is:

- 4" (10cm) ice fishing, walking, cross country skiing
- 5" (12cm) one snowmobile or ATV
- 8"-12" (20-30cm) one car or small pickup
- 12"-15" (30-38cm) one medium truck (pickup or van)

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