

COUNTY OF OAKLAND
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

MICHAEL J. BOUCHARD



"ICE SAFETY ALERT"

December 8, 2009

Dear Residents:

With the sudden onset of freezing temperatures this month and the forecast continuing to call for below freezing temperatures, many of our ponds and lakes are just now starting to develop a thin layer of ice. This thin layer of ice can be deceiving and at times deadly for residents who venture out from shore. It may take weeks for adequate *safe* ice, but we need to raise the awareness level and remind everyone right now to avoid these types of tragedies.

Ice conditions change day by day, lake by lake and location by location. Our freeze-thaw conditions in southeast Michigan are predictable for creating unsafe ice conditions throughout the winter. Although we do provide general ice safety guidelines, "no ice is 100% safe". We recommend five inches of solid clear ice for general foot traffic such as ice skaters and fisherman, and eight inches of solid clear ice for travel by snowmobile or ORVs (Off-Road Vehicles).

Judging safe ice is not an easy task considering the many factors involved. A major concern for our first responders is children and young people who venture out onto the ice driven by a natural curiosity. Parents and care providers should take a moment to point out and warn young people how unpredictable the ice may be and how unforgiving the cold water will be.

Pets that venture out onto the ice are another common cause for near-drowning and deaths. If you discover your pet has ventured out onto the ice, resist the urge to go out after them. Stay at a safe location on shore and persuade them back to safety.

The accompanying "Ice Safety Tips" will assist you when judging ice conditions. Understanding the risks will help keep your family, friends and neighbors safe. "When in doubt, don't go out"!

Sincerely,

Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard