

NDG&F November 28th Newsletter

Anglers Need to be Cautious of Early Ice

Winter anglers are reminded to be cognizant of early ice conditions before traveling onto and across North Dakota lakes.

Nancy Boldt, state Game and Fish Department water safety coordinator, said there haven't been many days where the high temperature has remained below freezing. "We need several consecutive days of cold weather to produce stable ice," Boldt said.

Boldt urges anglers and trappers to be cautious over the next several weeks. "It's important to be careful, and to not move about recklessly on early ice," she added. "In addition, visit with locals, including other anglers and people at local bait shops, before going on any lake."

Some tips to be aware of are:

Snow insulates ice, hampering solid ice formation, and makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides the blemishes, such as cracked, weak and open water areas.

Avoid cracks, pressure ridges, slushy or darker areas that signal thinner ice. The same goes for ice that forms around partially submerged trees, brush, embankments or other structures.

Ice thickness is not consistent and can vary significantly even in a small area. Ice shouldn't be judged by appearance alone. Anglers should drill test holes as they make their way out on the lake, and an ice chisel should be used to check ice thickness while moving around.

Daily temperature changes cause ice to expand and contract, affecting its strength.

The following minimums are recommended for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions. However, early in the winter it's a good idea to double these figures to be safe: 4 inches for a group walking single file; 6 inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle; 8-12 inches for an automobile; and 12-15 inches for a pickup/truck.

These tips could help save a life:

Wear a personal flotation device and carry a cell phone.

Carry ice picks or a set of screwdrivers to pull yourself back on the ice if you fall through.

If someone breaks through the ice, call 911 immediately. Rescue attempts should employ a long pole, board, rope, blanket or snowmobile suit. If that's not possible, throw the victim a life jacket, empty water jug or other buoyant object. Go to the victim as a last resort, but do this by forming a human chain where rescuers lie on the ice with each person holding the feet of the person in front.

To treat hypothermia, replace wet clothing with dry clothing and immediately transport victim to a hospital.

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Winter Workshops

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program has scheduled one-day winter workshops Jan. 26-27 at Cross Ranch State Park, Center, and Feb. 24, 25 and 26 at Lake Metigoshe State Park, Bottineau.

Cross-country skiing (Jan. 26) and snowshoeing (Jan. 27) will be offered at Cross Ranch.

Lake Metigoshe offers a variety of classes. A class on dog sledding for first-timers only is available all three days with a limit of six participants per session (this class fills quickly). Snowshoeing and tracking, winter survival and cross-country skiing are available Feb. 25 and 26.

Women interested in the workshops are encouraged to [register online](#) at the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov. Those interested should sign up immediately, as each class is limited to 12 participants. The cost is \$75 for dog sledding and \$50 for the other classes. Sign up for a class on two days and receive a \$15 discount. Preregistration with payment is required. Equipment and snacks will be provided.

An [information and registration form](#) is available for download by accessing the department's education/outreach link, or by contacting Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095; (701) 328-6312; or email ndgf@nd.gov.