WATER & OUTDOORS

Ice thickness & access safety

Use measurements as warning information, never as permission to enter frozen water. River ice deserves particular caution.

> No ice is completely safe. When conditions are uncertain, stay on shore.

Read conditions first

- Ice strength depends on quality, temperature, currents, snow cover and recent weather. Thickness can change over a short distance.
- Iowa DNR gives four inches of clear ice as a minimum reference for ice fishing. That is not a guarantee or a site inspection.
- Stay off river ice and ice around moving water, inlets, outlets, docks or visible openings. Vehicle tracks do not prove adequate ice.

Use a cautious decision chart

- Unknown thickness, slush, dark openings, recent thaw or changing conditions: do not enter.
- Below the DNR minimum reference, or cloudy, layered or degraded ice: do not treat it as suitable walking ice.
- Any thickness: follow closures and local advice. This guide does not approve cars, trucks, snowmobiles or other vehicles for ice travel.

If an outing is appropriate

- Ask a local authority or knowledgeable site operator about current conditions. Check throughout the route rather than relying on one measurement.
- Avoid going alone. Carry a worn life jacket, ice picks, whistle, floating rope, dry clothing and a protected phone.
- Leave a route and return time with someone on shore. Turn back promptly if conditions change or any person feels unsafe.

If someone breaks through

- Call 911 and give the exact access point and last visible location. Keep others off the ice.
- Do not run onto the ice or form a human chain. Offer flotation only from secure shore and follow dispatcher guidance.
- After rescue, protect the person from further cooling and obtain emergency medical care. Being able to speak does not establish that someone is well.

Sources & further guidance

Iowa DNR - stay safe on ice | www.iowadnr.gov
Iowa DNR - deteriorating ice conditions | www.iowadnr.gov