



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY**



**MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 15, 2015

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**MEMA ISSUES ICE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS**

FRAMINGHAM, MA – In spite of the recent cold spell, the ice conditions of many bodies of water across the Commonwealth remain uncertain, as demonstrated by the recent ice rescues of a number of individuals and pets. Therefore, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has issued information regarding safety precautions to be taken on our frozen lakes, rivers and ponds.

“Before we experience a tragedy that is unfortunately too common this time of year, it is important that we remind everyone, particularly children, of the dangers of unsafe ice,” said MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz. “People may be a bit impatient and venture out on the ice for skating, hockey, ice fishing and other winter sports before understanding the conditions. We highly recommend the use of recreational skating areas provided by the Commonwealth and your local communities. It is very important to exercise precaution and common sense.”

Always check with your local police, fire or park department to ensure that safe ice conditions exist. However, due to the uncertainty and constant changing of ice conditions and the dangers presented, many departments will not endorse the safety of lakes, ponds, streams or rivers. The strength and thickness of ice should be known before any activity takes place.

- Never go onto the ice alone. A friend may be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through the ice.
- Always keep your pets on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice do not attempt to rescue your pet, call 9-1-1 or go for help.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice. As ice ages, the bond between the crystals decays, making it weaker, even if melting has not occurred.
- Beware of ice covered with snow. Snow can insulate ice and keep it strong, but can also insulate it to keep it from freezing. Snow can also hide cracks, weak and open ice.
- Slush is a danger sign, indicating that ice is no longer freezing from the bottom and can be weak or deteriorating.

Region I  
P.O. Box 116  
365 East Street  
Tewksbury, MA 01876  
Tel: 978-328-1500 Fax: 978-851-8218

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P.O. Box 54  
12-I Rear Administration Road  
Bridgewater, MA 02324-0054  
Tel: 508-427-0400 Fax: 508-697-8869

Region III / IV  
1002 Suffield Street  
Agawam, MA 01001  
Tel: 413-750-1400 Fax: 413-821-1599

- Ice formed over flowing water (rivers and lakes containing a large number of springs) is generally 15% weaker.
- Ice seldom freezes or thaws at a uniform rate. It can be one foot thick in one spot and be only a few inches thick 10 feet away.
- Reach-Throw-Go. If a companion falls through the ice and you are unable to reach that person from shore, throw them something (a rope, jumper cables, tree branch, etc.). If this does not work, go for help or call 9-1-1, before you also become a victim. Get medical assistance for the victim immediately.
- If you fall in, try not to panic. Turn toward the direction from which you came. Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface, working forward by kicking your feet. Once out, remain lying on the ice (do not stand) and roll away from the hole. Crawl back to your tracks, keeping your weight distributed until you return to solid ice.

For more information, visit the MA Department of Fire Services' Ice and Cold Water Safety webpage at <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/dfs/dfs2/osfm/pubed/fs-topics/fs-topics-a/ice-and-cold-water-safety.html>.

By following safety procedures, you can be safe and enjoy the many winter activities offered by the great outdoors.

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management

For additional information about MEMA, go to [www.mass.gov/mema](http://www.mass.gov/mema). Also, follow MEMA on *Twitter* at [www.twitter.com/MassEMA](http://www.twitter.com/MassEMA); *Facebook* at [www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA](http://www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA); and *YouTube* at [www.youtube.com/MassachusettsEMA](http://www.youtube.com/MassachusettsEMA). *Massachusetts Alerts*: to receive emergency information on your smartphone, including severe weather alerts from the National Weather Service and emergency information from MEMA, download the *Massachusetts Alerts* free app. To learn more about *Massachusetts Alerts*, and for additional information on how to download the free app onto your smartphone, visit: [www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp](http://www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp).

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