



Canadian Red Cross
Croix-Rouge canadienne

S.L.I.D.E.S. into Winter Safety

Drowning Prevention Key Messages

Every winter people engage in outdoor and recreational activities, but sometimes they make unwise choices which result in tragedy. Please review the following information to prepare you and your family with safety tips to make wise choices, prevent injuries and to be safe in, on and around the water.

Supervision

Learn what to do

Implement a plan

Dress appropriately

Education

Safety

Did you know?

- 22% of deaths from cold water from 1991-2000 occurred during activities on ice. Major categories of activity included snowmobiling (55%), other motorized travel on ice, including ATVs, cars and trucks (11%), and non-motorized activities on ice, including fishing, skating, hunting, walking and daily active living (34%).
- Boating represented 38% of total cold water immersion deaths, while falls into water accounted for 14% of total deaths
- None of the toddlers and only 10% of 5-14-year-olds who drowned during activities on ice were accompanied by an adult.
- 61% of cold water immersion deaths from 1996-2000 were males aged 15-54
- Of the deaths that occurred among males aged 15-54, 40% were alcohol-related
- The Aboriginal population accounted for 15% of total deaths from cold water immersion

For more information on water safety education, visit www.redcross.ca/ontario



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Supervision: Watch children around the water at all times

- When engaged in activities around water and ice, children must be within sight and reach of an adult

Learn what to do in case of emergency

- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and frostbite.
- Hypothermia: shivering, numbness, slurred speech, confused or unusual behaviour, bluish lips
- Frostbite: numbness, tingling, pain and swelling, loss of sensation, skin may become dark bluish
- Call emergency services immediately if someone is suffering from hypothermia.
- Hypothermia should be treated gently. Get out of the cold and let the body warm up.
- Frostbitten areas should be handled gently. Never rub the skin. Warm the affected area by immersing in warm water, cover with clean, sterile bandages and seek medical attention.

Implement a safety plan

- If you are going on a trip, plan ahead –always tell someone who you are going with, where you are going and when you will return.
- Always be prepared - have safety and rescue equipment (first aid kit, blanket, rope, and a phone) with you.
- Monitor the weather and environment for any changes.

Dress appropriately

- Wear warm layers of clothing and wool socks.
- Wear a lifejacket/personal flotation device (PFD) or floater suit and a helmet.
- Wear a warm hat - over 50% of body heat is lost through the head and neck.
- Mittens are more effective than gloves.

Education: Learn how to be safe and teach your children

- Discuss water safety practices and wise choices around the water.
- Teach children to respect the water – water sustains life but it can also take away life. Learn to recognize the dangers and how to protect yourself.
- Learn to recognize signs and symptoms of hypothermia and how to treat it.

Safety while ice fishing, snowmobiling and driving all-terrain and other vehicles

- If you are driving an ATV or snowmobile near water, follow the shoreline.
- Wear a lifejacket/PFD or floater suit.
- Leave 15 metres between vehicles when driving an ATV or snowmobile and travel at a speed appropriate for the conditions.
- Alcohol and snowmobiling or driving an ATV don't mix - operating a vehicle while impaired is illegal and dangerous.
- Check the ice thickness before any ice activities – it should be:
 - 15 cm of uniform thickness for skating, walking or skiing in small groups
 - 20 cm for larger groups, such as skating or hockey parties
 - 25 cm for snowmobiles or all-terrain vehicles
- Avoid ice that has recently frozen, thawed and then frozen again

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