

Don't Be Fooled By The Thin Ice

February 13 2021 7:10 AM



URBANA – Prolonged cold weather opens many recreational opportunities. It also opens up the potential for tragedy.

[Curt Sinclair, University of Illinois Extension](#) 4-H natural resources specialist, offers these guidelines for assessing whether icy ponds and rivers are safe.

"A minimum of four inches of clear, newly-formed ice is needed to support one person on foot," Sinclair says. "New ice is usually stronger than old ice, and clear ice is usually stronger than ice that appears cloudy."

Ice across a pond is seldom uniform, Sinclair says. Water movement and snow cover can cause vast differences in ice thickness and strength. Moving water under frozen streams will weaken the freezing process.

"A pond may have 12 inches of ice in one area and only 1 inch of ice only 10 feet away," Sinclair says. [Illinois 4-H](#) offers a new [winter ice safety video](#) at go.illinois.edu/icesafety to teach youth basic ice safety guidelines.

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources offers anglers these [ice fishing tips](#) at its website:

- Test the thickness of the ice in several areas.
- Wear a personal floatation device under winter gear.
- Don't fish or play on the ice alone and keep a safe distance from others on the ice.
- Carry a rope to pull someone out of the water if needed.
- Carry a pair of ice picks to pull oneself out of slippery, water-covered ice.

ABOUT ILLINOIS EXTENSION: Illinois Extension leads public outreach for University of Illinois by translating research into action plans that allow Illinois families, businesses, and community leaders to solve problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to changes and opportunities.