

Ice Fishing Safety: How do I rescue a victim?

Preparation and prevention is the best way to stay safe on the ice. Have a safety kit ready before you head out to the ice. Make sure your fishing party agrees on an emergency plan, and make sure someone staying at home also knows the emergency plan. Whenever you're on the ice, **you should always carry ice picks or a set of screw drivers** that will float and are securely connected together with a piece nylon cord 24 to 30 inches in length. These picks should be carried in a manner allowing for quick and easy access. These tools will give you better leverage on the ice should someone fall through it. Below is a supply list for your safety kit.

SAFETY KIT SUPPLY LIST

Ice chisel or auger to check the ice thickness.

Always carry ice picks or set of screw-drivers that will float and are securely connected together with a piece nylon cord 24 to 30 inches in length. These picks should be carried in a manner allowing for quick and easy access so you can pull yourself out of the water and back onto the ice. "Pick-of-Life" ® is a product which is commercially available.

50 feet of nylon rope with a large loop tied to each end.

Wool blanket.

Thermos of HOT liquids.

A cell phone or portable CB to call for assistance.

Help! My buddy's fallen through the ice!

The first thing to do is STOP. The rescuer needs to stay calm and have a plan. Use the following process to help you – the rescuer.

Count to four:

1. Who's number one?
 - Remember that you (the rescuer) are number one.
 - You can go from rescuer to victim in a second. Keep yourself safe so someone is left to rescue the victim(s).
2. What happened to you?
 - What happened to the victim? How did he fall through the ice?
 - Look at the ice around the victim. How do you keep from becoming a victim?
3. Don't get any on me.
 - This step usually refers to keeping a barrier between you and bodily fluids – such as latex gloves, but we can also apply it to the water in this scenario. Remember: **DO NOT BECOME A VICTIM.**
4. Are there any more?
 - Is there more than one victim? Victims who are screaming can distract rescuers from victims who aren't making noise.

This process only takes a moment and can save your life as well as the victim's. When you are done assessing the situation, you can use the examples below to get the victim out of the water.

Figure 1



If the victim hasn't already utilized his ice picks or screwdrivers, now would be the time to remind him.

Figure 2



If the victim lost his ice picks/ screwdrivers when he fell through the ice, toss him a floatation device. This can be a life jacket, empty water jug or any buoyant object.

Figure 3



REACH the victim with a long pole, board, rope, blanket or jumper cables.

Figure 4



Build a human chain in which rescuers lie on the ice with each person grasping the feet of the person in front. Once on the ice, roll away from the weak or broken ice; do not attempt to stand up.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is the effect of cold conditions, water or wind on the body's temperature. More cases of hypothermia are reported each year during the spring and summer than in the fall or winter. Outdoors enthusiasts tend to be better prepared for colder temperatures but fail to realize the danger of hypothermia is always present given the right conditions.

Hypothermia or, "cold-related illness" as it is referred to, is the process when the body loses heat, (specifically to its vital organs) at a rate faster than it can be produced. This cooling off of the body core can be fatal if it is not addressed in the early stages.

Normal body temperature is 98.6 ° Fahrenheit or (37 ° Celsius) hypothermia will occur when the body's temperature falls below 96 ° Fahrenheit or (35.5 ° Celsius). The initial symptoms of hypothermia may not be noticed, as this is a gradual process usually beginning with confusion and difficulty thinking.

Older adults, infants, younger children and individuals who have low body fat may be more at risk for hypothermia when subjected to lower temperatures. This is especially true if they have other illnesses, or are on medications which may affect the body's ability to regulate its core temperature. There have been cases of older individuals developing mild hypothermia in their own home from the use of air-conditioners. Others at greater risk for hypothermia are drug or alcohol abusers.

Degrees of Hypothermia

- Mild hypothermia – The individual may be shivering but is alert and coherent.
- Moderate hypothermia – The individual will probably be shivering but may abruptly stop and become irrational and experience lack of coordination.
- Severe hypothermia – Shivering may or may not be present. Some victims may act combative and attempt to remove clothing and experience a feeling of warmth. Hiding from the rescue party has been observed with severe hypothermia, followed by unconsciousness. Extremities (arms and legs) must be moved very slowly to prevent blood which has cooled in the extremities from moving to the body's core which may result in cardiac arrest

Indications of Hypothermia

- Difficulty Speaking
- Slow, shallow Breathing
- Shivering (older adults may not have this symptom)
- Exhaustion
- Irrational Behavior
- Hallucinations
- Forgetfulness
- Pupils Dilated
- Skin turning Blue
- Confusion
- Muscles becoming Rigid
- Dizziness
- Nausea

If you observe someone experiencing any of these symptoms contact emergency personnel immediately, call (911). If emergency services are not available proceed as follows

- If the person is not breathing start CPR immediately.
- Keep the victim from direct contact with the ground.
- Wet clothing (especially cotton) should be removed and replaced with dry.
- Keep the person warm by covering them with a blanket or in spare clothing if available. Do not confine the person by wrapping a blanket around them; cover the persons head (not their face).
- You may also hold or lay next to the victim to transfer body heat.
- If possible move the victim to a warmer location; this must be done very slow and gentle.
- Don't apply direct heat or use hot water, heating pads or a heating lamp to warm the victim. Apply warm towels to the neck, chest wall and groin. Don't attempt to warm the arms and legs. Heat applied to the arms and legs forces cold blood back toward the heart, lungs and brain, causing the core body temperature to drop. This can be fatal.

- If the person is alert give warm liquids, not hot (if the person is vomiting do not give food or liquids). Do not give the individual alcohol or try to force them to eat or drink. If the person is able to eat they should have carbohydrate-rich foods.
- Give the person a warm bath (not hot) if possible.
- Individuals with severe hypothermia should not walk, and need to be treated at a hospital as soon as possible.
- The effects of hypothermia will last from 3 to 12 hours with treatment.

Preventing Hypothermia

Be prepared for sudden changes in weather, Storms can move into an area within a matter of minutes, be prepared for bad weather. Below are guidelines for the prevention of hypothermia.

- Carry a back pack equipped with a rain fly, or have a heavy duty plastic bag to act as a water proof cover.
- Keep hydrated, drink plenty of nonalcoholic fluids, if the weather is cold drink warm liquids during the time you are out.
- A tin cup for heating water or melting snow.
- Have high-energy food along for emergencies.
- Carry matches, butane lighter or a magnesium fire starter.
- A knife or small hatchet.
- A space blanket or a piece of plastic for use as a temporary shelter.
- A rain coat, hat or hooded sweatshirt and gloves.
- Dress in layers; use an inner layer to wick moisture away from your skin, polypropylene or polyester is a good choice. Use wool or fleece as a middle layer for insulation. The outer layer must be waterproof and be breathable. A breathable outer layer will not trap moisture or humidity inside the garment.
- Waterproof boots.
- Wool or fleece socks (2 pair)

- If the outside temperature rises or if you are exerting a lot of energy, remove a layer or layers of clothing. Sweating increases the chances of hypothermia, all clothing must be dried before it is put back on.
- Clothing and footgear should not be tight fitting; this will cut off the circulation.

(Remember you can always remove clothing if you get hot, but you can't put on what you don't have)

We would like to recognize the North Dakota Game and Fish Department for providing information which was used in part for Ice Fishing Safety.