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"Your Local
Health Department"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ice Safety Tips

Coldwater, MI. Whether you enjoy ice fishing, snowmobiling, or walks in Michigan's Winter Wonderland, you should always remember some safety tips when crossing lakes or rivers that are covered in ice. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency recommends the following safety considerations if you are thinking about venturing out onto an iced-covered lake or pond:

Ice Thickness Considerations...

- If the ice is only 2 inches thick or less – Stay Off!
- Wait until the ice is at least 4 inches thick to walk on it or go ice fishing.
- Wait until the ice is at least 5 inches thick to consider going snowmobiling.
- Wait until the ice is between 8 to 12 inches thick to consider driving on it with a small vehicle.
- Wait until the ice is 12 to 15 inches thick to consider driving on it with a medium sized pickup truck.

Planning on using an "Ice Shanty"? About **4-6 inches** of good clear or blue/black ice is good, but if you are with more than one person, it'd be a good idea to wait until the ice is **6+ inches** and solid.

Easy to remember "tips" about ice...

- "Thick and blue, tried and true; Thin and crispy, way too risky."

- New ice is usually stronger than old ice. Four inches of clear, newly-formed ice may support one person on foot, while a foot or more of old, partially-thawed ice may not.
- Ice seldom freezes uniformly. It may be a foot thick in one location and only an inch or two just a few feet away.
- Ice formed over flowing water and currents is often dangerous. This is especially true near streams, bridges and culverts. Also, the ice on outside river bends is usually weaker due to the undermining effects of the faster current.
- The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process. The extra weight also reduces how much weight the ice sheet can support. Also, ice near shore can be weaker than ice that is farther out.

BE PREPARED with a safety plan if you are going out on the ice...

- Tell people where you are going. If something does go wrong while you are testing or recreating, already have in place the safety procedures that you will carry out for immediate rescue. **Never** go without a buddy or two. Tell other people where you and your buddy are and what time you expect to return home. This is not an occasion for casual spontaneity.
- Wear some form of flotation device, even a boating life-jacket, especially if you are testing or snowmobiling. Carry an icepick which can assist in giving you grip should you fall in.
- Have a spare set of warm dry clothes in a waterproof bag handy. That way you can reduce the risk of hypothermia by changing the wet clothes immediately. Other useful supplies to have as part of an emergency kit include an emergency blanket, hand and foot warmers, thick socks, spare warm hats, candles and matches. Pack such emergency items for all winter sports outdoors, including skating.

For more information about how to prepare for the winter, be it traveling or playing, check out our webpage at www.bhsj.org. And remember - **Above all STAY SAFE!!!**

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