

# SNOWMOBILE SAFETY

## Conservation officer talking points



- Ride at a safe speed and ride sober. Speed, drugs and alcohol are leading causes for nearly all fatal accidents.
- Ride on the right side of the trail.
- Keep your machine in top mechanical condition.
- Wear insulated boots and protective clothing, including a helmet, gloves and eye protection.
- Check the weather conditions before you depart.
- Never ride alone.
- When possible, avoid crossing frozen bodies of water. Never operate in a single file when crossing frozen bodies of water.
- Remain alert to avoid fences, low-strung wires and branches.
- Always look for depressions in the snow.
- Keep headlights and tail lights on at all times and clear of snow and ice.
- When approaching an intersection, come to a complete stop, raise off the seat and look both ways for traffic.
- Overall, "ride right" so you can make it home to your family and friends.

**For more information on snowmobiling in Michigan, go to [Michigan.gov/snowmobiling](https://Michigan.gov/snowmobiling)**



Michigan conservation officers are fully commissioned state peace officers who provide natural resources protection, ensure recreational safety and protect citizens by enforcing Michigan's laws and regulations. Located in every county of the state, conservation officers are first responders that provide lifesaving operations in the communities they serve.

# ICE SAFETY

## Conservation officer talking points



- Ice is never considered safe
- There is no reliable "inch-thickness" to determine if ice is safe
- If you are going on the ice, test the thickness and quality of ice using a spud, needle bar or auger
- Clear ice with a bluish tint is the strongest type of ice
- Ice formed by melted and refrozen snow appears milky and is often weak
- Ice covered by snow should be considered unsafe
  - Snow acts like an insulating blanket and slows the freezing process
  - Ice under the snow will be thin and weak
  - A recent snowfall can warm and melt existing ice
- If there is slush on the ice – stay off
  - Slush ice is only about half as strong as clear ice and indicates the ice is no longer freezing from the bottom
- Use caution on ice that has formed following a recent cold front
  - A sudden cold front with low temperatures can create cracks within a half-day
  - A warm spell may take several days to weaken the ice, causing the ice to thaw during the day and refreeze at night
- Ice weakens with age – the longer ice has been frozen, the weaker it becomes
- Big lake ice:
  - Conditions can vary in just a few feet
  - Use caution around pressure cracks
  - The stronger the current, the more likely the ice will give to open water
  - If there's ice on the lake but water around the shoreline – use caution
- Avoid areas of ice that have protruding debris, such as logs, brush, plants and docks, including areas near marinas or warm water discharges near power plants

### Tips for being on the ice:

- Wear a lifejacket and bright colored clothes
- Bring ice picks or ice claws
- Carry a two-way communication device that you know receives signal; keep it readily available



### If you do break through the ice, remember the following:

- Remain calm.
- Don't remove your winter clothing. Heavy clothes won't drag you down, but instead can trap air to provide temperature warmth and flotation. This is especially true with a snowmobile suit.
- Turn in the water toward the direction you came from – that is probably the strongest ice.
- If you have ice picks, dig the points of the picks into the ice while vigorously kicking your feet to pull yourself onto the surface by sliding forward on the ice.
- Roll away from the area of weak ice. Rolling on the ice will distribute your weight to help avoid breaking through again.
- Get to shelter and remove your wet clothing, redressing in warm, dry clothing and consume warm, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated beverages as soon as you can.
- Call 911 and seek medical attention if you feel disoriented, have uncontrollable shivering or have any other ill effects that may be symptoms of hypothermia, which is a life-threatening condition.

# COLD WEATHER SAFETY

## Conservation officer talking points



- Dress appropriately
  - Wear light layers that can easily be added or removed
  - It is possible to overheat even during the winter
- Check the weather before you go out
- Carry the appropriate equipment for your activity
  - Flashlight, rope, ice picks, ice claws
  - Have spare equipment available in case something breaks
- Stay hydrated and fueled – bring water and snacks
- Recreate with a buddy
- Communicate
  - Establish a check-in system
  - Inform others about where you will be and how long you plan to be gone
  - Carry a two-way communication device that receives service in remote areas
- Be aware of your health – if you're not feeling well, don't go out



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