



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Stay safe as Iowa lakes freeze over

The recent blast of arctic air is growing ice on lakes and ponds over much of Iowa. Anglers are ready to get out for the popular early ice fishing season.

“Many of us can’t wait to get out on the ice each winter,” said Joe Larscheid, chief of fisheries for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “Ice fishing is a fun, inexpensive activity for anglers of all ages to get outdoors and avoid cabin fever.”

The DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing and at least five inches for snowmobiles and ATVs.

“Check ice thickness as you make your way to your favorite fishing spot,” Larscheid said. “Ice conditions change constantly and its thickness can vary across the lake. Trust your instincts – if the ice does not look right, don’t go out.”

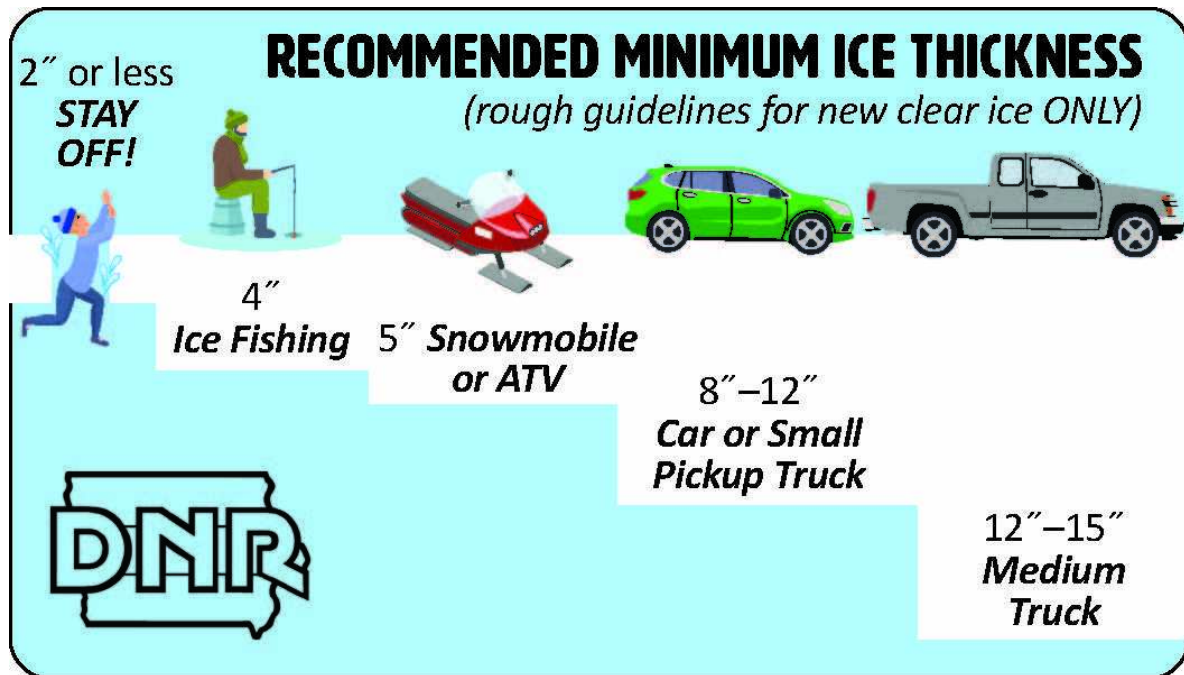
A blanket of snow on top of an ice-covered lake insulates the ice, slowing the growth of ice and hiding potential hazards or weak spots. River ice is 15 percent weaker than lake ice. Ice with a bluish color is safer than clear ice. Avoid slushy or honey-combed ice and stay away from dark spots on the ice. Don’t walk into areas where the snow cover looks discolored.

Safety Tips on the Ice

- No ice is 100 percent safe.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice.
- Don’t go out alone - if the worst should happen, someone will be there to call for help or to help rescue.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
- Check ice thickness as you go out - there could be pockets of thin ice or places where ice recently formed.
- Avoid off-colored snow or ice. It is usually a sign of weakness.
- The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process.
- Bring along these basic items to help keep you safe: hand warmers, ice cleats to help prevent falls, ice picks (wear around your neck) to help you crawl out of the

water if you fall in, a life jacket, a floating safety rope, a whistle to call for help, a basic first aid kit and extra dry clothes including a pair of gloves.

Media Contact: Joe Larscheid, Chief of Fisheries, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-201-3376.



Winter aeration system in use at three Northwest Iowa lakes

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has turned on the winter aeration systems at Center Lake and Silver Lake in Dickinson County, and Ingham Lake in Emmet County.

The aerators are designed to reduce the chance of a winter fish kill due to low dissolved oxygen levels in the lake. Oxygen is not injected into the water with the aeration system, but there is an exchange of oxygen when the air hits the open water. The aerators create open areas where fish can go when oxygen levels start to decline.

Aeration holes are marked with thin ice perimeter signs. Lake users should avoid the open water around the aerators. Unsafe ice will vary depending on the weather. Always check the ice conditions before you venture away from the shoreline.

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