



Ice Fishing Safety Checklist

BY TIM ALLARD

Hard-water fishing is not without its risks. Be prepared with the necessary safety items should trouble arise. The following is a sampling of recommended ice-fishing safety gear to carry.

- ☐ **Ice drill and ruler:** use to bore holes and measure ice thickness;
 - ☐ **Chisel:** punch the ice in front of you with this tool as you walk to test for thin ice;
 - ☐ **Ice picks:** for gripping the ice to pull yourself out;
 - ☐ **Flotation suit or PFD:** both provide flotation, but a suit extends survival time;
 - ☐ **Throw rope:** use to help victim while maintaining a safe distance, when professionals aren't available;
 - ☐ **Ice boot cleats:** increase traction on slick ice, reducing slips and falls;
 - ☐ **First-aid kit** in waterproof case: should include hook removal equipment;
 - ☐ **Handheld GPS** with extra batteries: for navigation, during low-light, foggy, or white-out conditions (have a compass back-up);
 - ☐ **Fully-charged cell phone** in waterproof case, for emergency calls in areas with service;
 - ☐ **Flashlight or headlamp:** to avoid hazards and maintain a safe walking path;
 - ☐ **Tool kit:** for on-ice repairs of snow-machines, ATVs, augers, shelters, etc;
 - ☐ **Sunglasses:** eye protection from harmful ultra-violet rays and projectiles;
 - ☐ **Full set of spare clothes** in duffle bag: for changing in case of submersion or wet feet, and when underdressed for weather;
 - ☐ **Pocket knife** or multi-tool: for various outdoor scenarios;
 - ☐ **Fire-starting kit:** Multiple lighters or matches in waterproof containers in separate pockets;
 - ☐ **Food and water:** staying hydrated and energized generates body heat and alertness;
 - ☐ **Space blanket:** for wind protection and insulation;
 - ☐ **Phone numbers** of local authorities: call before a trip to inquire about ice conditions, this is especially important at the beginning and end of a season when conditions can change constantly. The list may include local media, police, MNR, snow machine clubs, ice-hut operators, tackle shops.
 - ☐ **Fishing friends:** it's best not to go out alone.
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- LEAVE AT HOME:**
- Fishing itinerary:** include fishing location, nearest town, access point, members of the fishing party along with contact numbers, and duration of trip — always call home once you're off the ice;
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- ON SNOWMOBILE OR ATV:**
- ☐ **Extra** fuel, oil, spark plugs, and other machinery supplies to be prepared for extended outings;
 - ☐ **An axe:** for collecting wood if you need to spend the night outdoors;
 - ☐ **An extra belt for snowmobile:** you never know when you will need it;
 - ☐ **Fuel:** Leave with a full gas tank and top off oil