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Sheriff warns dangers of thin ice[Print Page](#)**By Sharon Stone**

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With the sudden onset of freezing temperatures this month and the forecast continuing to call for below freezing temperatures, many of the area's ponds and lakes are starting to develop a thin layer of ice.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard is warning residents that this thin layer of ice can be deceiving and at times, deadly for residents who venture out from shore. He said it may take weeks for adequate safe ice, but everyone needs to raise the awareness level now and to be reminded to avoid these types of tragedies.

Ice conditions change day-by-day, lake-by-lake and location-by-location. The freeze-thaw conditions in southeast Michigan are predictable for creating unsafe ice conditions throughout the winter.

"Although we do provide general ice safety guidelines, no ice is 100-percent safe," said Bouchard.

The sheriff's department recommends 5 inches of solid clear ice for general foot traffic, such as ice skaters and anglers, and eight inches of solid clear ice for travel by snowmobile or off-road vehicles.

Judging safe ice is not an easy task considering the many factors involved. A major concern for first responders, said Bouchard, is children and young people who venture out onto thin ice driven by natural curiosity. "Parents and care providers should take a moment to point out and warn young people how unpredictable the ice may be and how unforgiving the cold water will be."

Pets that venture out onto the ice are another common cause for near drowning and deaths, said Bouchard. "If you discover your pet has ventured out onto the ice, resist the urge to go out after them.

"Stay at a safe location on shore and persuade them back to safety."

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