



Bedfordshire

Fire & Rescue Service

 bedsfire.gov.uk
 Southfields Road
Kempston, Bedford
MK42 7NR
 bedsfirealert.co.uk
 @bedsfire

For the attention of Parents and Guardians

Children/Young People's safety around lakes, rivers and bodies of open water

Dear Parents,

We want to alert parents and young people of the potential dangers and risk to life of playing near and on frozen bodies of water in Bedfordshire.

We would ask all parents and carers to remind their children of the dangers of ice, and why they must keep away from it.

Last year an incident within the West Midlands sadly claimed the lives of four young people after they fell through the ice of a frozen lake. This incident is a stark reminder to us all of the dangers of open water, especially during the winter months.

During the winter months the cold weather can lead to sections of our rivers, lake ponds and canals freezing over. Due to the relatively mild winter climate within the UK frozen bodies of water should always be treated as a significant hazard.

Whilst we understand the temptation to walk across or play on the frozen water, last year's incident in the West Midlands serves as a stark reminder of the dangers associated with frozen water.

The advice of the Bedfordshire Drowning Prevention Group is **to never go on to the ice under any circumstances**. Whilst the ice may appear to look stable at the bank side, the thickness of the ice can change significantly within a very short distance. If you were to fall through the ice it can be extremely dangerous due to the cold temperatures of the water and the possibility of currents pushing you under unbroken ice.

The Royal Life Saving Society UK offer advice for winter water safety, with simple steps to keep safe during the winter:

1. Never go onto the ice to play, to retrieve an object, or a pet.
2. Never enter the ice to rescue somebody, call 999 and ask for the Fire and Rescue Service.

What to do if YOU accidentally fall through ice:

- Stay calm and shout for help.
- Spread your arms out across the surface of the ice in front of you.
- Lie flat and use your arms to pull yourself over the ice towards the shore.
- If the ice on the water breaks, try to make your way to the bank or shore, breaking ice in front of you as you go.
- If you find yourself stuck and unable to escape, wait for help. Stay as still as possible to conserve your energy. Bring your arms close to your sides and keep your legs together, while keeping your head out of the water.



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- When you are safely out of the water it is important to go to hospital for a check-up.

What to do if you see **SOMEONE ELSE** fall through the ice:

- Shout for help, call 999 and – if the incident involves inland water – ask for the Fire Service. At the coast, ask for the coastguard.
- Do not go onto the ice to attempt a rescue.
- Call out to the casualty and encourage them to stay calm.
- To try to reach the person from the bank, use a rope, pole, tree branch, clothes tied together or anything else that can extend your reach.
- Lie down flat on the bank, to avoid slipping or being pulled in.
- If you cannot reach them, try sliding something that floats – like a football or large plastic bottle – to them, to help them float.
- If the casualty is too far away, **DO NOT** try to rescue them yourself. Wait for the emergency services to arrive. Continue to remain calm and reassure the person.

Please also see the attached Factsheet [The Dangers of Frozen Water Factsheet | StayWise](#)

Visit [WWW.Staywise.co.uk](https://www.staywise.co.uk) for more learning resources that you can use at home provided by the Emergency Services .



what3words

We are encouraging everyone to download what3words as this helps us to identify a location when it is not addressable e.g. by a lake or a rural country road. The App can be downloaded for free onto a mobile phone. More information can be found at www.what3words.com

- If you are in a rural area and are unsure of the exact location, try using what3words.
- This will give you 3 keywords to give to the 999-call operator. This enables emergency services to know your exact location and the best access point to send help.

Despite the obvious safety risks, Fire Service have no authority to stop people being near open water, but if you have concerns of safety or anti-social behavior, we would ask you to report this through to the Police non-emergency number on 101.

If someone is in trouble and needs help in an emergency, please call 999.

Kind Regards

Stacey Moore
Community Safety Officer
Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service



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THE DANGERS OF FROZEN WATER

TOP TIPS TO STAY SAFE

NEVER GO ON THE ICE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

This includes attempting to rescue another person or animal who may have fallen through the ice.

ONLY USE WELL LIT AREAS

Try to take walks in the daylight but if you must walk in the evening, only use well lit areas and avoid anywhere with water.

KEEP AWAY FROM THE EDGE OF THE WATER

Never go close to the edge or lean over to touch the ice. You may overbalance or trip and fall in.

ALWAYS WALK WITH AN ADULT OR A GROUP OF FRIENDS

Look out for each other and if someone does fall through the ice there will be others around to raise the alarm and get help

Every year children are at risk when they are tempted to play on the ice formed on open waters and adults find themselves at risk as they attempt to save them. Over 50 % of ice related drowning involved an attempted rescue of another person or a dog.

Areas with frozen waters can be beautiful to look at but they are also extremely dangerous. Here are some useful tips to help you enjoy these areas safely.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL THROUGH THE ICE

Keep calm and shout 'help'

Spread your arms across the surface of the ice in front of you

Try to kick your legs and pull yourself out of the water and on to the ice

Lie flat, spreading your weight across the surface and pull yourself to the bank. you may find it easier to roll.

If you cannot climb out, wait for help and keep as still as possible. Keep your head above the water, press your arms by your side and keep your legs together

Once you are safe, it is important that you go to hospital immediately for a check up



WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE SOMEONE FALL THROUGH THE ICE

Shout for **'HELP'** and dial **999** or **112** if you can

DO NOT walk on to the ice to attempt a rescue

Shout to the person to **'KEEP STILL'** and offer reassurance.

If they are close enough, **LIE DOWN TO AVOID OVERBALANCING** and falling onto the ice, and try to reach them with a tree branch clothing tied together or anything else which can extend your reach.

If you cannot reach them, **SLIDE SOMETHING** which floats across the ice, such as a plastic bottle or a football, so that they can hold on to it to stay afloat whilst help is on the way.

If they are too far away, **WAIT FOR THE EMERGENCY SERVICES** and reassure the casualty from the safety of the bank.

StyWise