

## SAFER SAILING ON THE ICE

**CHECK FIRST:** Check a sailing area before you stop paying attention. If you are at all apprehensive, trust your instincts; get off the ice. Its a good idea to get out and skate without your wing to see about obvious hazards near the launch area which may be indicative of the larger arena. Check the sailing area carefully before you start to go fast.

Folks who want to know more about the dynamic ice we sail on, I strongly urge you to visit <http://lakeice.squarespace.com> Visit the site to learn what you need to know about ice.

**GEAR:** If you are on the ice, you need to wear picks. You should also have a throw line. If you are sailing a wing, you need to be wearing a helmet. Knee pads are really nice.

**SELF RESCUE:** You need to be prepared to self rescue or rescue. By the time the local fire department or search and rescue folks show up, its likely you will be near death or close to it. Its tough for anyone to survive in icy water for more than about 45 minutes.

**PICKS:** They need to be worn properly. Good commercially available picks have adjustable straps so that the picks can be snugged up outside all clothing under your chin. Picks worn loosely are prone to flip around your neck behind your head, this is because they float. Picks can also sling around your head due to the violent motion suffered if you fall. Loose picks can get tangled. Picks stowed in a pocket, or tucked inside coats are useless. Picks snugged under your chin/helmet will be right where you want them.

**USING PICKS:** Get out as fast as you can. Turn around, swim and pick your way back the way you came to stronger ice. Weak ice will break when you push down on it. Swim, kick, try to be horizontal, apply pulling force, do not push down. Remember: go back the way you came. Roll or slither to stronger ice before you attempt to stand.

**THROW LINE:** Carry one for the partner you pull out if need be. Be quick. Most folks will not be able to grab a line after too long spent in the super cold water.

**HELMET:** Folks on the ice are prone to fall down. Slamming your unprotected head against the hard ice causes concussions. The wind can smack you if the winds are capricious. Helmets are warm.

If someone in your party hits their head hard, its time to watch them carefully. Ask for a social security number or a phone number, slow answers, befuddled behavior could mean its time for concussion protocol. Remember: do not prescribe anti inflammatory NSAID drugs for folks who may have internal injury or concussion. A slow careful transit back to the car may be in order. Folks who may have suffered a concussion can not be left alone. Be prepared to drive for them, perhaps to the nearest emergency room.

**SAILING WITH YOUR FRIENDS:** Ensure folks are wearing picks, and helmets, that they have throw lines. Make a plan and discuss it!!!! Do not sail away from the other members of your party beyond reasonable communication or observation without a plan. Remember that you are together on the ice, that you support each other if circumstances go sour. You wont be able to help your friend out of the water if you dont see them fall in.

**TOURING:** Plan ahead. Its usually a good idea to key on the slowest member of the group, to sail out and back or around the slowest person. Communication is crucial. All members of a sailing group should be aware of the other group members. Its recommended to stop and talk. Discuss objectives, share observations, confirm ability levels. Folks who are sailing beyond their confidence level should be escorted to a more secure place. Folks who are sailing at low confidence levels, or beyond an ability level, are more prone to accident. Do not sail fast on ice you have not checked ahead. Be aware. Most folks come to grief touring outside the checked arena. They assume conditions without checking or being careful and aware.

PIT AREAS/ LAUNCH SITES: Its not reasonable to expect everyone at a launch site to be in the same party. However it is a good goal to attempt to communicate with everyone on the ice to ensure that folks know the condition of the sailing surface, to confirm knowledge and ability level, to verify sailing plans and intensions. It is a bummer to watch as the sun sets, as darkness sets in, meanwhile there is an empty car. Could someone be on the ice? Is that person alone? Where are they? Could that person be in trouble? This scenario is easy to avoid if folks bother to communicate.

When you sail selfish, you are a liability. If you get hurt, your action on the ice shines on everyone else out there with you. Dont ruin it for for the rest of us because you did not bother to be responsible. Local law enforcement can take away popular sailing and skating venues because they feel like legislating common sense. Take the time to share your plans and observations with the rest of the folks out on the ice. Its rude to assume that folks will follow you, or to assume that what you are doing is obvious. Cell phones are useful tools.

Plan and communicate. Taciturn rocks sink eventually.