

Ice Safety is Simple: Stay Off

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It's a chilly winter morning and you are walking your dog, Annie, around the neighborhood. Suddenly she sees a goose on the ice of a pond, begins barking, and pulls away from you. Midway to the goose, the ice breaks, and Annie splashes into the water.

Your role, as a resident or bystander, is simple. Stay off the ice and call 911. South Metro Fire Rescue's firefighters are trained and equipped to rescue people and pets from icy lakes and ponds.

You are not. You don't have the training or the special equipment.

If your dog runs onto the ice and falls in, stay on shore and call 911. If you see a person after they fell through the ice, call 911.

An ice rescue has four deliberate stages:

Self-Rescue: If you fall through the ice, find the ice edge where you fell in because it is the strongest. Put your elbows on the ice surface, kick your legs so they float behind you, kick harder to push yourself forward, and climb onto ice. Once on the ice, roll on your side all the way to safety.

If you can't kick hard enough to get onto the ice, your arms will freeze on the ice, which will keep your head above the water if you pass out from hypothermia or exhaustion.

If someone else has fallen through the ice, coach them through a self-rescue while calling 911 and reminding them that help is on the way.

Reach: When they arrive, firefighters will attempt to reach the person or animal with a branch, pole, or ladder.

Throw: If reaching doesn't work, firefighters will throw a life ring, life vest, or rope to the person.

Go: If needed, firefighters trained and equipped for ice rescue crawl onto the ice to rescue the person or animal (pet, livestock, or non-bird wildlife). They have special protective suits and equipment including a rope that connects them to rescuers who remain on shore.

Although a sheet of ice may appear strong, it often hides cracks, air pockets and weaker layers that can surprise even the most prepared among us.

The best advice: Stay Off the Ice. If a person or animal falls in, call 911.