

DNR urging caution as ice anglers take to frozen waterways

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ROCK COUNTY (WKOW) – Despite bone chilling temps, thin ice remains a real concern for anglers. "We've gone from two to three inches of ice, to six to eight inches," Blue Ribbon Outdoors Guide Austin Ragotzkie said about the recent increase in ice.

"We've actually had ice over the entire lake here for the last week," Ragotzkie said peering out over Lake Koskonong.

But that doesn't always mean the ice is safe.

"It takes time for that ice to build up," DNR Warden John Sinclair said.

"Even several days after cold nights of cold temperatures, you can't guarantee everything is gonna be frozen," Sinclair added about why caution must be used this early into the ice fishing season.

Wednesday, a fisherman in Sauk County fell through the ice about 150 yards out on Dutch Hollow Lake. Those with him formed a human chain and helped him get out.

"Take a buddy with you, take a friend so you are not alone out there, don't go out in poor visibility or conditions," Warden Sinclair said.

Ragotzkie says you want to make sure to look for black ice on the water, a sure bet that it's safe to walk on, but if you see chalky white ice, be wary, it could be thin.

"Spots like that, this lake [Lake Koskonong] has springs in it in different areas and over those springs, the ice will never get that thick," Ragotzkie said. "We just know the ways the current and the water moves, those areas that aren't safe" Ragotzkie added about the importance of hiring a guide.

"I think some people take that for granted and ends up costing them," he said.

If you do find yourself falling under the ice, the DNR says you should try and stay calm and do not take off your clothing. For a short time, your coat and shoes can actually help you float until help arrives.