



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,

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Bedfordshire Police and the Local Authorities, have been contacted about young people across the county playing near and on frozen bodies of water in Bedfordshire.

We want to alert parents and young people of the potential dangers and risk to life.

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

Sunday's incident in Solihull, where four young people sadly lost their lives, is a stark reminder to us all of the dangers of open water, especially during the winter months.

Frozen lakes, ponds, canals and reservoirs can look picturesque, but they can be lethal. There can be no greater warning of this than Sunday's awful events.

The cold weather that we are experiencing has meant that many bodies of water froze over and created hazardous conditions. We appreciate the temptation to walk across or play on the frozen water, but we would like to urge everyone to know what dangers are associated with frozen water.

Our advice is to never go on to the ice under any circumstances. The ice may appear thicker than it is but please be aware that ice can be weak, especially as you move further from the edge. If you were to fall in it can be extremely dangerous due to the cold temperatures of the water and the possibility of currents pushing you under unbroken ice.

RLSS UK offer safety 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
- When you're safely out of the water it's important to go to hospital for a check-up



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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 on to 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 can't 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



what3words

We are encouraging everyone to download what3ords as this helps us to identify a location when it isn't 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 gives us an exact location, enabling 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