

One of my favorite early memories of Lake Mary doesn't involve water. It involves ice!! Smooth, glass-like ice, and me skating across the lake, thrilled that I could go "where only boats could go." I relied upon my Dad to tell me whether or not the ice was safe. But how did he know?

According to the Wisconsin DNR, ice should be at least 4 inches thick for winter activities such as skating, hiking, cross country skiing and ice fishing. Ice thickness can vary across an area, so be sure to check more than one spot. Snowmobiles require more than 4 inches of thickness. Ice boating and snowmobile enthusiasts also need to watch out for open water. "Thick and blue, tried and true; thin and crispy, too risky," advises the DNR.

Appropriate clothing is crucial to enjoying winter on the lakes. Remember, there is no such thing as bad weather. There is only poor dressing! Winter outdoor enthusiasts need a base clothing layer of moisture-wicking material such as polypropylene. The next layer could be wool or fleece. And the top layer should be some sort of waterproof windbreaker.

Ice fishing is a popular winter sport in Wisconsin. In fact, winter fishing makes up nearly one fourth of the annual catch in our state. People who enjoy ice fishing often construct ice shanties of wood or plastic in order to protect themselves from blowing snow and wind. No permit is required to place an ice shanty on Lake Mary or Lake Elizabeth.

Gliding across a frozen lake remains one of life's wonderful simple pleasures. And with care, it can be a safe one too. (And don't forget the hot chocolate!!!)

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