



RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

ABRA Ice Safety Q&A

AuburnBayRA.ca

Q: When is lake ice safe?

A: Lake Ice is never considered “100% safe.” Many factors affect ice quality and thickness, so lake ice always poses some risk. In order to best mitigate these risks, the ABRA has a system in place to monitor and check the depths and quality of Auburn Bay’s lake ice. The entire ice surface must meet the ABRA’s requirements before the lake is opened for use.

Q: What do the red and green flags mean?

A: The green flag means that the lake ice is open for you to use at your own risk. The red flag means that the lake ice is closed.

Q: What causes the red flag to be shown?

A: If the ABRA staff find, through testing our ice conditions and thickness, that the lake ice does not meet our minimum safety requirements, we close the ice and show the red flag.

Q: What are the ABRA’s safety considerations?

A: The ABRA has two main areas of ice safety concerns: 1) the ABRA is responsible for not putting its staff into a risky situation without proper personal protective equipment, training, and supervision and 2) the ABRA is responsible for minimizing risks to residents, particularly to children using the lake facility who may not be able to evaluate such risks.

Q: Where the ABRA’s safety rules come from?

A: The ABRA’s safety rules come from industry standards and intensive research.

Q: Are safety rules the same for staff and residents?

A: No. The ABRA has a duty of care to our employees that is different than the residents. The ABRA requires its employees to work on the ice; therefore, we provide proper training, equipment, and supervision. Residents, on the other hand, use the ice at their own risk, after we have deemed the ice safe.

Q: If I see a staff person on the ice does that mean it’s okay to go on the ice?

A: No. The flags tell you if the ice is open or not. You may see staff on the ice measuring the thickness or working to prepare the ice for residents. However, these staff have special equipment, training, and supervision that residents do not have. Even if a resident feels competent to check the ice depth near their own dock, nobody is allowed on the ice until the entire lake is deemed safe by ABRA staff. Even though the ice may be a safe thickness in one spot doesn’t mean that it is the same for the entire lake.

Q: What kind of personal protective equipment does staff use?

A: The staff are required to have: floatation suits and/or life jackets, a rescue throw bag, work gloves, steel-toe boots, clothing appropriate for the elements, a long ruler to test the ice, radios, and screw drivers or ice picks (to help pull themselves out of the water back onto the ice, if needed). The ABRA staff have available dry clothing, blankets, and first aid kits. The ABRA staff are also trained in ice rescue and first aid. Furthermore, the ABRA staff never go out on the ice alone – they are supervised by another staff member from shore when the red flag is up.

Q: What are the parameters that the ABRA staff use to determine if a green flag can be flown?

A: The ABRA’s procedures for ice condition and thickness are as follows.

Ice conditions:

- Clear, black ice is the strongest.
- White or slush ice can have half the strength of black ice.
- Dry cracks in black ice can be okay, as they typically heal.
- Wet cracks that can be exposed and packed with ice/snow can be okay.
- Water and slush on top of the ice weakens it.
- Small holes that can be packed with ice/snow can be okay.
- Holes more than 8 to 10 inches wide usually indicate weaknesses. Whether these holes can be safely accessed and patched depends on the amount of water overflow around the holes. If the holes can be safely accessed and patched, they can be okay for the green flag.
- Rapid changes in temperature can reduce the strength of the ice by up to half.

Thickness of solid clear blue/black lake ice:

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| • Skating, ice fishing, and walking on the ice by individuals or groups: | 6-8 inches |
| • Operation of smaller equipment (i.e. walk behind and small utility vehicles): | 6-8 inches |
| • Operation of the Zamboni: | 14 inches |

Q: When does the ABRA use the Zamboni?

A: The ABRA uses the Zamboni when the temperature is between 4°C down to -20°C. When the temperature is too cold, the Zamboni can freeze and become inoperable.

Q: What about other lakes’ ice?

A: Other lakes’ ice is not Auburn Bay’s ice. Other lakes’ conditions and procedures are not ours (though they may be similar). We do testing and thorough examinations of our ice conditions and thickness to determine if the ice is safe enough to fly the green flag. Oftentimes, some lakes will be open while others are not, and conditions can change continuously at all lakes.

Q: Is it okay to throw heavy objects/debris onto the ice to test the thickness myself?

A: No. Please do not throw any rocks or other objects onto the lake ice to “test” ice thickness. These rocks/objects freeze into the ice and present a significant hazard to staff members, equipment, and residents skating on the lake.

Q: Why is Auburn Bay always the last lake to open?

A: Auburn Bay is not always the last to open. We open our lake when our testing indicates that we can, not when other lakes are open. Each lake is different, so each lake opens at different times.

Q: Is the ABRA being too careful?

A: No. The ABRA is risk adverse and our procedures reflect that. For example, the ABRA considers the fact that our lake is not supervised continuously by staff and that we have young children accessing and using our amenities. Those children may or may not be well supervised. Those children may not have the ability to evaluate risk. These considerations make us very risk adverse when it comes to children's safety. For this reason, we are concerned about holes that a small child could fall through, and we may close the whole lake even though holes are not everywhere. Large holes in the ice are indications of weakening ice.

Q: Where can I find out more information?

A: Keeping in mind that the ABRA's Safety Procedures are the procedures we follow; below are some links you can use to find out more about general ice safety:

- <http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/Fire/Pages/Safety-tips/Ice-safety.aspx>
- <https://mywildalberta.ca/fishing/safety-procedures/ice-safety-tips/default.aspx>
- <http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/050/documents/29913/29913E.pdf>
- <http://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/swimming-and-water-safety-tips-andresources/swimming--boating-and-water-safety-tips/ice-safety>
- <http://www.albertacamping.com/blog/53/>
 - <http://conf.tac-atc.ca/english/annualconference/tac2015/s24/barrette.pdf>
 - https://work.alberta.ca/elearning/icesafety/pdfs/ice_safety_field_guide_2009.pdf
 - https://www.inf.gov.nt.ca/sites/inf/files/resources/0016-001_norex_ice_road_constr._web.pdf

Q: Who do I ask if I have more questions?

A: You are always welcome to email our Landscape and Amenities Manager (parksdept@auburnbay.org) or our General Manager (gm@auburnbay.org). If you feel that your question or concern has not been answered to your satisfaction, you are welcome to contact the Board of Directors (board@auburnbay.org).