



RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

ABRA Ice Safety Q&A

AuburnBayRA.ca

Q: When is the 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. To best mitigate these risks, the ABRA has a system in place to inspect and monitor the condition and thickness of Auburn Bay's lake ice. The lake ice is not open for recreational activities until all measured areas of the lake ice meet the ABRA's minimum safety requirements.

Q: What do the red and green flags mean?

A: Green flags mean that the lake ice is open for you to use at your own risk. Red flags mean that the lake ice is closed to everyone except for ABRA staff who are conducting inspections of the lake ice.

Q: Why is the red flag displayed?

A: If inspections of the condition or thickness of the lake ice do not meet the ABRA's minimum safety requirements, the lake ice is closed, and the red flag is shown.

Q: What are ABRA's main ice safety considerations?

A: The ABRA has two main areas of ice safety concerns:

- 1) Minimizing risks to ABRA staff by implementing training, procedures, protective equipment, and supervision.
- 2) Minimizing risks to residents and guests, especially those who are children, as they may not be able to properly evaluate ice hazards.

Q: Where do the ABRA's ice safety rules come from?

A: The ABRA's ice safety rules are based on extensive research and align with established industry standards.

Q: Are the ice safety rules for ABRA staff the same as those for Auburn Bay residents and guests?

A: No. The ABRA has a duty of care to our employees that is different from the duty of care for Auburn Bay residents and guests. The ABRA requires its employees to work on the ice; therefore, we provide training, procedures, protective equipment, and supervision for our employees. Residents and their guests, on the other hand, use the ice at their own risk after the ABRA has opened the ice for recreational use.

Q: If I see ABRA staff on the ice, can I go on the ice too?

A: No. Only the green flags indicate that the lake ice is open to residents and guests for recreational use. You may see ABRA staff out on the lake ice conducting inspections or working to prepare the lake ice for residents and their guests. However, these staff have received training, procedures, protective equipment, and supervision that residents have not. Even if a resident feels competent to check the ice depth near their own dock, no one is allowed onto the lake ice until the entire surface has been deemed safe by ABRA staff. Even

though the lake ice may be a safe thickness in one spot, that does not mean that the thickness is uniform for the entire surface of the ice.

Q: What safety measures do ABRA staff use when testing ice under red-flag conditions?

A: During start-of-season checks, ABRA staff are required to wear flotation suits or life jackets. They are required to carry a rescue throw bag and ice picks (to help pull themselves out of the water and back onto the ice, if needed). While the red flags are up, ABRA staff never go out on the ice alone, and they are always supervised by another staff member from the shore.

Q: What are the parameters that ABRA staff use to determine green-flag conditions?

A: ABRA staff assess both ice condition and thickness:

Ice Condition Indicators:

- Good:
 - Solid, clear blue/black ice.
- Acceptable:
 - Dry cracks in blue/black ice. These cracks typically heal.
 - Wet cracks in blue/black ice, if they can be packed with ice or snow.
 - Small holes in blue/black ice, if they can be packed with ice or snow.
 - Larger holes (8 - 10 inches) in blue/black ice, depending on the amount of water overflow.
- Poor:
 - Water or slush on the surface of the ice. This weakens the ice.
 - White ice or slush ice. These types of ice are only half as strong as blue/black ice.
 - Rapid changes in temperature. This can reduce the strength of the ice by up to half.

Required Thickness of Good-Quality Lake Ice:

- Skating, walking, ice fishing:
 - At least 5 inches at all measured locations.
- ABRA maintenance vehicles:
 - At least 9 inches at all measured locations.
- ABRA Zamboni operation:
 - At least 14 inches at all measured locations.

The ABRA reserves the right to determine green-flag conditions using professional judgement, and not exclusively upon the requirements listed above. Weather conditions and other relevant factors may influence the decisions of ABRA management.

Q: When does the ABRA use the Zamboni?

A: The ABRA uses the Zamboni when the temperature is between 4°C and -20°C. When the temperature is below -20°C, the Zamboni may freeze and become inoperable. The ABRA only uses the Zamboni on the lake ice if the ice condition is adequate and the ice thickness is at least 14 inches at all measured locations.

Q: Should I throw rocks or heavy objects onto the ice to test the thickness myself?

A: No. Please do not throw any rocks or heavy objects onto the lake ice to “test” the ice thickness. These objects will either break through the ice surface, causing weak points, or they will freeze into the surface of the ice. Objects frozen into the surface of the ice present a significant hazard to ABRA staff and equipment, as well as to skaters.

Q: Why don't all lakes open for skating/walking/ice fishing on the same date?

A: Every lake is different in terms of shape, size, and depth, and each is subject to local conditions. Additionally, the ice safety procedures of other lake associations are not identical to those of the ABRA, although they may be similar. We only open our lake ice for recreational use when our ice testing indicates that we can do so safely.

Q: Is the ABRA being overly cautious in its lake ice procedures?

A: No. The ABRA is risk adverse and our procedures reflect that. We understand that individuals have different levels of knowledge regarding ice safety and ice hazards. Our green-flag conditions are set based on the overall safety of the entire lake, not just on isolated areas. Large holes in the ice create the potential for a person to fall through into the water, so we may close the entire lake ice surface due to the presence of such holes on a single area. In addition, we have many young children who access our amenities. Those children may not be well supervised, and they may not have the ability to accurately evaluate risks associated with the lake ice.

Q: Where can I find out more information about ice safety?

A: The ABRA follows its own safety procedures. Below are some links you can use to find out more about general ice safety:

- calgary.ca/CSPS/Fire/Pages/Safety-tips/Ice-safety.aspx
- lifesaving.org/public-education/water-smart-tips2/ice-safety-tips
- mywildalberta.ca/fishing/safety-procedures/ice-safety-tips/default.aspx
- conf.tac-atc.ca/english/annualconference/tac2015/s24/barrette.pdf
- 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).