

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO KEEP PEOPLE OFF UNSAFE ICE

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A young child highlighted the difficulty of keeping people off frozen stormwater ponds by wandering onto one as Oakville Fire chief Paul Boissonneault gave a safety talk on the subject Jan. 27.

At around 3 p.m., the fire chief was near a stormwater management pond discussing the importance of staying off the ice when a child, who appeared to be six-to-eight years old, could be seen walking onto the ice on the other side of the pond.

The child left the ice on their own after a few moments, before nearby bylaw enforcement officers could intervene.

"That's exactly what we're talking about," said Boissonneault.

"We have to have parents talk to their children about

"Stormwater management ponds can be extremely dangerous. They were never built with the intention of fulfilling recreational activities and we need to take this very seriously."

- Oakville Fire Chief Paul Boissonneault

safety and staying away from these shorelines."

Footprints visible in the snow at other parts of this pond show this child was not the only one to step onto the ice recently. Halton police said that over the past few weeks they have received numerous calls about people playing or skating on unsafe ice.

On Jan. 23, they took to Twitter warning that outdoor ice will never be completely safe.

They said venturing out

onto unsafe ice (including ice now forming on stormwater management ponds) puts the lives of residents, bystanders and first responders at risk.

On Dec. 19 an 11-year-old boy died after falling through the ice of a stormwater pond in Milton.

"Just because there looks to be ice, that does not mean that ice is safe," said Boissonneault.

"Stormwater management ponds can be extremely dangerous. They



David Lea/Metroland

Oakville Fire chief Paul Boissonneault discusses the importance of staying off the ice of stormwater ponds.

were never built with the intention of fulfilling recreational activities, and we need to take this very seriously."

The fire chief noted flowing water, air temperature, sunshine, wind, pollution run-off such as road salt and snow all impact the thickness of stormwater pond ice, making it unpredictable.

He said it only takes a moment for hypothermia and drowning to take place after a child, adult or pet falls through the ice.

The chief said parents need to talk to their children to make sure they stay away from the shorelines of stormwater ponds, flooding canals, rivers or any other bodies of water.

"We want people to en-

joy the winter activities outdoors, but we need to have them do so safely and ensure that they stay off the ice," said Boissonneault.

The fire chief's safety talk is part of a joint winter safety campaign launched by the Town of Oakville, the City of Burlington, the Town of Halton Hills, the Town of Milton and Conservation Halton to educate residents about the dangers associated with waterways this time of year.

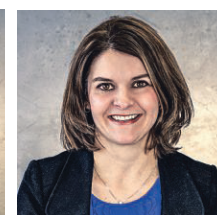
Municipal officials said residents can practice water safety and stay safe this winter by remembering:

- To keep family members and pets away from all bodies of water
- Not to follow pets or people on the ice or attempt to rescue, and call 911 for assistance
- Avoid recreational activities in or around waterways, and check with your local municipality for alternative outdoor skating opportunities.

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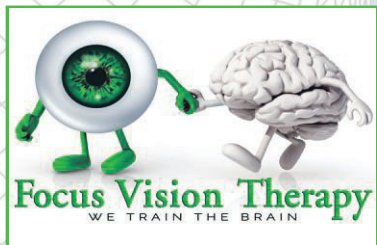
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