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"Ice safety tips"



City of Norfolk firefighters Nick Bentz and Dan Nelson participate in an ice rescue exercise.

Ice can be deceiving. It looks safe to walk on until you hit a thin area and all of a sudden you're in ice cold water. Landon Grothe, City of Norfolk Fire Captain, recommends that people stay off of the ice unless they are ice fishing and have the appropriate safety equipment.

"Never go out on the ice and don't let your kids or pets go out and play on it. You may think it's strong enough but there may be a spot where vegetation underwater has absorbed heat so the ice isn't as thick there," Grothe said.

Grothe received certification as a Ice Rescue Technician and has been supervising members of the Norfolk Fire Division who are practicing ice rescues at Skyview Lake. Insulated inflatable suits

and waterproof boots enable the firefighters to get into the ice cold water and be "rescued" by their peers who help them onto a water rescue board and pull them out of the lake. The buoyant board has straps and a sling for a victim to grab onto. A floatable noodle type ring, water rescue tether and towing system are also used during the practice drills.

Grothe reminds people that Norfolk ordinances prohibit ice skating at Skyview Lake and at Ta-Ha-Zouka Park. He has seen many occasions when a dog has gone onto the ice and fallen in.

"People need to keep their dogs on a leash at all times around the water. Pets have a tendency to want to run after water fowl on the ice and it's very easy for them to sink into the water in the areas of weak ice," Grothe said.