

Our November meeting took place on November 2, 2016 at 7pm. Elections for the fire department officers are coming up. The development of a budget for the next year is in progress. Hemorrhage kits have been assembled and added to our medical gear. Thankfully, this has been a safe hunting season for our township and we did not need these kits. We completed training on the use of an Epi pen, AED, and King airway. We also did some training with our gas monitor. On November 16, at the Cotton Town Hall, several departments came together for training on railroad safety given by a CN railroad representative.

There are several miles of railroad track that run through our township. There are also several miles that run through our neighboring towns and along Highway 7. A derailment or accident along any portion of these tracks can affect our township residents. Several trains a day run through these areas, and these trains often carry hazardous materials. Evacuation of township residents would be necessary. Our department will begin working on a plan for responding to a railroad emergency. Do we have the tools and gear needed? How will residents living in the Bass Lake area evacuate? How about those living along Melrude Road? How will we notify residents that an evacuation is necessary? These and other questions must all be answered in our plan. Our residents can plan also. If there is such an emergency, how would you evacuate? Look around where you live and make a plan. Be prepared. Be safe.

Ice is forming on the lakes in our area. Some of us have been training with our ice suits. These suits keep the wearer warm when we must respond to an emergency in open water in the winter. People are anxious to get on the ice for ice fishing, snowmobiling, ... The DNR has guidelines for when to venture onto the ice. If there is 2" or less of ice formed, please stay off the ice. It can not support any weight. 4" of ice may support a person's weight for walking or ice fishing. 5" could support a snowmobile or ATV. Driving a car or small pickup on the ice requires at least 8"-12" of ice. 12"-15" of ice might support a medium truck. Remember, ICE IS NEVER 100% SAFE! These guidelines are for new, clear ice. White ice or "snow ice" is only half as strong, so you must double the thickness recommendations. The formation of the ice is affected by temperature, snow cover, currents, springs, and rough fish. Ice is not the same thickness over the entire body of water. It can be 2 feet in one place and just an inch a short distance away. The DNR recommends that you check the ice at least every 150 feet. The thickness of the ice can be checked using an ice chisel, ice auger, cordless drill, or tape measure. Park vehicles at least 50 feet apart, and move them every 2 hours to prevent sinking. The DNR recommends making a hole next to a vehicle. If water starts to come over the hole, the ice is sinking and it is time to move.

If you plan to drive on the ice, keep your windows down and have a plan for an emergency. The best time to escape from a vehicle is before it sinks. Side windows are a better option for escape than doors. You can try to push a windshield or rear window out with your feet. Doors may be opened when the car is completely filled with water, unless they are blocked by mud. Do not wear a flotation device if you are traveling on the ice in an enclosed vehicle. It could prevent escape from a sinking vehicle. However, you should wear a life vest under your winter gear if you are walking, fishing, or riding in an open vehicle. There are flotation snowmobile suits available which would be a safe alternative.

Always carry a pair of ice picks. It can be very difficult, if not impossible, to pull yourself back onto the surface after you have broken through the ice. The surface of the ice will be slippery, and your clothes will be weighted down with water. If you break through the ice, turn towards the direction that you just came from. The ice held you there, so it is probably stronger. Dig the points of your picks into the ice and slide yourself forward while kicking your feet. Roll away from the area of weak ice and get to shelter and heat. Take off your wet clothing and get into dry clothing or wrap yourself in a blanket. Call 911! Hypothermia can set in quickly and you may be too disoriented to call for help if you wait to see if you are okay. The cold blood that has been trapped in your arms and legs can rush back to your heart as you warm up. This can cause a heart attack!

It is a good idea to take someone with you when on the ice. But what if your partner falls in? Resist the urge to run up to the hole to help them out as this will result in 2 victims. Call 911. Try to reach or throw something such as a rope, or your ice picks out to the victim. Do not get pulled in, though! Plan ahead to have something available in case of an emergency. A rope for others and ice picks for you should always be part of your gear when you plan to venture on the ice. Be prepared! Be safe!

Our next meeting will be on December 7, 2016 at 7pm. at the Bass Lake Firehall.