

Feb. 8, 2024

Dear School Principal and Administrators:

It's been an unusually warm winter which means there's even more reason to play outside. With the Family Day weekend approaching, we are reminding families and kids heading out for a skate to stay safe and stay off storm ponds, and reinforcing where they can find safe outdoor skating near them.

Storm ponds play an important role in your community, helping to provide protection from overland flooding while returning cleaner water back to the river. While they might look inviting to walk, skate or play on, **recreational activities are not allowed on storm ponds** because the ice is not safe.

Storm ponds are not like regular ponds. They are part of your community's stormwater system and are there to reduce community flooding and clean stormwater before it returns to our rivers. Storm ponds have hidden hazards that can be dangerous to people and pets. Water levels are constantly changing as water moves between inlet and outlet pipes, resulting in unstable air gaps and quickly changing depths. Storm ponds also contain sediment and contaminants (e.g. bacteria, fertilizers, pesticides, vehicle fluids, road salt) that are collected as water travels through the community and can weaken the ice.

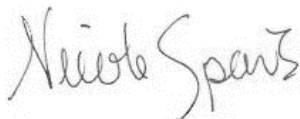
This makes the ice on storm ponds unpredictable and potentially unstable even when it looks solid. Ice can appear thick in some areas, but other areas may have little, or no ice and snow can cover visible hazards.

Unfortunately, children and families may underestimate the dangers; we're continuing our efforts to improve that. We've improved signage at these sites, increased outreach activities and are working with community partners to help share this message and promote safe locations for skating.

We're asking for your support to help distribute this information to your students and their households. Attached is a short article and images that can be used in upcoming emails/newsletters or posted on your website along with social media posts.

Should you have any questions, please contact Nicole Sparks, Manager, Stormwater & Field Operations Support at nicole.sparks@calgary.ca.

Thank you for helping us make this a safer winter for your students and their households.



Nicole Spark
Manager, Stormwater & Field Operations Support
Water Services



Pete Steenaerts
Deputy Fire Chief
Calgary Fire Department

SUGGESTED EMAIL OR NEWSLETTER CONTENT

Stay safe, stay off storm ponds

Before lacing up, The City of Calgary wants to remind you and your families to be safe while enjoying outdoor skating.

City of Calgary or community-designated outdoor skating rinks are open, offering fun, free skating for all skill levels. Rinks maintained by The City are checked daily for ice thickness and quality, and surfaces are flooded as needed to make sure they're safe for skating.

Prior to lacing up, it's important to remember that not all ice surfaces are safe for skating. While your community storm pond may look inviting, recreational activities are not allowed on them.

Storm ponds play an important role, helping to provide protection from overland flooding while returning cleaner water back to the river, but they have hidden hazards that make them dangerous to people and pets. Storm ponds contain sediment and contaminants (e.g. bacteria, fertilizers, pesticides, vehicle fluids, metals and road salt) that are collected as water travels across properties, streets, and roads that can weaken the ice. Rapidly changing water levels cause unstable air gaps and quickly changing depths, and ice thickness can vary. That's why it's not safe to skate, walk or play on storm ponds.

Find a safe place skate to skate near you at calgary.ca/rinks

Suggested social media post

Keep you and your family safe this winter by staying off community storm ponds.

Even if the ice looks frozen solid, conditions are still dangerous. Unlike a normal pond, water levels are constantly changing which creates unstable air gaps between the ice and water. Plus, water in these ponds contains sediment and contaminants, which weaken the ice.

Instead, find a safe City or community outdoor skating rink near you at [Calgary.ca/rinks](https://calgary.ca/rinks)

IMAGES AND VIDEOS



PSA Video: Stay safe. Stay off storm ponds.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fk9_GBpThPg

Stay safe. Stay off storm ponds.



Social media: Stay safe. Stay off storm ponds.
**Images are attached in accompanying email.*

1024 x 512 (Twitter)

1200 x 630 (Facebook)



Social media: Storm pond illustration and icons
**Images are attached in accompanying email.*

1024 x 512 (Twitter)

1200 x 630 (Facebook)