



Ohio Department of Natural Resources

John R. Kasich, Governor
James Zehringer, Director

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Ohio Landowners Encouraged to Prepare for Potential Thaw

Ice jams pose flooding threats statewide

COLUMBUS, OH – After a long winter season filled with frigid temperatures across the state, this winter is starting to give way to a spring thaw. With this in mind, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) wants to remind landowners to consider potential problems that may accompany warmer weather as it moves into the state this week.

Ohio's cold winter has led to the creation of many ice jams throughout the state. An ice jam is created when subfreezing temperatures create a blockage in a river or stream; the blockage can consist of several smaller chunks of ice called a "breakup" or a more solid appearing dam called a "freeze-up." Minor flooding has already occurred in some areas upstream of the jams. Though flooding and ice related damages may occur on rivers and streams of any size, currently affected major rivers in Ohio include the Maumee, Rocky, Chagrin, Grand, Scioto, Olentangy, Muskingum and Tuscarawas rivers.

A rapid thaw may trigger a sudden break in an ice jam, releasing both ice and water and creating the potential for flooding. Problems may exist in floodplains as well as areas not typically prone to flooding, but near waterways. Proactive steps have been taken by state and local officials, including infrastructure design, to mitigate the effects from the ice jams, but the National Weather Service estimates that ice jams and subsequent flooding cause approximately \$125 million in damage across the country each year. Flood risks vary with location and the weather, but anyone who lives or owns property near a water source should:

- Monitor ice conditions and water levels.
- Secure any structures and materials located in high-risk areas.
- Create a plan to leave high-risk areas in case of emergency.
- Avoid ice jams; do not walk or drive on or below the affected areas.

Some communities attempt to weaken jams, but this activity should be left to professionals. The National Weather Service forecasts and tracks weather patterns including flood potential and the conditions where thaws are likely. The Ohio Emergency Management Agency, ODNR, county and municipal emergency managers and floodplain officials are also monitoring ice and flood risk conditions and actively work to alert the public of hazardous conditions.

ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at ohiodnr.gov.

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