

Department of Natural Resources

Ice Shelter removal deadlines

Dark houses, fish houses and portables must be off the ice no later than midnight for each of the dates given in the categories below. County sheriffs may prohibit or restrict the use of motorized vehicles if dangerous ice conditions are present. If shelters are not removed, owners will be prosecuted. A conservation officer also may confiscate, remove or destroy any ice structure and its contents if not removed by the deadline. <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fishing/shelter.html>

Inland waters

- South of line - March 2, 2020
- North of line - March 16, 2020

Further Information from News Release by DNR for February 20, 2020

Cigarette butts. Propane canisters. Cans, bags and bottles – some full of human waste. Blocking materials. Fish carcasses. Those are just a few of the items that make up the long list of litter conservation officers have found out on the ice.

Litter is an issue throughout the ice fishing season, but it tends to be particularly problematic as the deadlines for removing fish houses from lakes loom. Trash left on the ice is not only an eyesore, but it also has the potential to negatively affect water quality, especially if the litter remains when the ice melts. “People need to clean up after themselves when they head home. The only thing they should leave is an imprint in the snow or ice,” said Rodmen Smith, director of the DNR Enforcement Division. “The majority of people do things right, but unfortunately there’s a subset of people who leave a mess on the ice and count on someone else to clean up after them.”

Conservation officers spend the winter monitoring anglers and documenting areas where they believe litter might be a problem. While these officers can’t watch every single fish house as it leaves the lake, every year people who leave their trash on the ice – and hope nobody notices – receive litter citations. Sometimes, it’s simply a matter of officers checking spots they suspect will be a problem. It’s also common for officers to hear from anglers upset about the trash left behind by the people they’ve fished near during the winter.

“Leaving trash on the ice isn’t a mistake or an oversight – the people who litter make a conscious decision to do it,” Smith said. “They take advantage of the fact that the majority of people care about our lakes and will clean up trash, even if it isn’t theirs.”