

DE-ICERS AND “BUBBLERS: CONSIDERING IMPACTS & BEST PRACTICES

With the return of a “Normal” winter this January, many residents who embrace winter have been taking advantage of the recent snows and cold weather to enjoy outdoor Winter Activities. Recent activities seen on the lake include Ice Fisherman, Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing, Ice Boating, and those just enjoying a walk in silence.

As more dock owners are using or considering the use of De-Icers or “Bubblers” as we commonly refer to these devices, many folks may not understand the impacts these devices have on the environment, some of the danger involved, potential liability, or the social issues related to the use of De-Icers.

A better understanding of these issues can greatly reduce these hazards, save energy, better protect your structure and the environment while helping you to be better neighbor. Thin ice and open water are a danger not only people but to dogs and wildlife as well.

It's best to install a De-Icer with a controller to regulate when it kicks on, this will save energy, money, reduce noise impacts and will help to prevent unintended areas of thin ice or open water. Operation of only 4 hours at night by way of a time (when winds typically are calmer and when Ice builds) have shown to be successful.

As one may not know, but lakes "rests" in the winter. If not set and operated correctly a De-Icer (especially propeller type) can stir up sediment reducing water clarity (and possibly undermine your dock!)

Without a layer of ice and snow, more light will reach the lakebed and can warm water temperature, potentially promoting algae and weed growth - and we all can agree that unwanted “weeds” are an issue at Indian Lake and we can only control certain types, and at Tax Payer Expense.

An unseen but real issue caused by the overuse of “Bubblers” is that where ice does form, (at this writing 2/5/2021 the current average is 10” according to resident Fisherman - and expected to grow more this winter) the “Iceberg” created can cause significant damage to shore when winds move ice onto shore causing more damage than the “Bubbler” Prevented. And ice, as you know, can sink Ships.

Thus, we might suggest avoidance of “circulator” de-icers which uses propellers to move the water to prevent freezing. Besides creating often times unpredictable thawing in areas that you hadn’t intended, they also require relatively large motors using significant amounts of energy and create noise. Consider a bubbler system instead. These systems better target specific areas and are quieter and cheaper to operate.

The Following Picture show correct application of a Bubbler system. There are a number of “correct” installations of De-Icers in operations around Indian Lake that affect a limited area but some that affect large areas beyond docks being protected.

Be a Good Neighbor and Use your De-Icing System properly!



AUTHOR NOTE: A majority of information was obtained from Manufacturers of de-icing equipment, various Homeowner Associations, and Municipalities in northern States where the use of “Bubblers” is regulated by Local or State Law.

Paul Balint
Indian Lake Borough Council
paul@indianlakepa.us