

Do Not Travel Against The Sun-Spring Time

Traveling by snowmobile in the north during spring can be dangerous. When the snow on the ice (Snow that has accumulated throughout the year) has melted; the seal holes are swirling with water; and when the ice has deteriorated leaving the top of the ice all melted; it is a dangerous time of the year to travel. A person has to be careful when traveling towards the sun by snowmobile. Some of the ice has melted from the bottom caused by the currents and some from the top by the heat from the sun, or by the falling softer snow. It is difficult to know if the water is deep or shallow. Some of the ice that deteriorates bores holes right through the ice leaving patches of “Ponds” everywhere, making it difficult to know if the water is just a puddle or something deeper or more dangerous. If the ice is deteriorated, a snowmobile can easily fall to the bottom of the sea. Also, individuals have to be careful not to step into these puddles of open water. Once a person falls in the water, it is very difficult to get back up unless there is someone there to reach out to help you. If you don't drown, hypothermia will certainly set in.

Every community in the north is aware of the dangers and knows someone whom may have lost their lives traveling against the sun. Traveling against the sun is difficult on the eyes when the sun shines all day, because everything is so shiny and bright. When you travel towards the sun, everything in front of you looks just like shiny sheets of ice, making it extremely difficult to discriminate between “deep” water and “deteriorated areas” on the solid ice. It helps to have good sunglasses to travel safely in the spring when the snow on the ice has melted. When you can see, you can avoid the deep holes and travel more safely. Proper clothing is recommended for spring travel as well.

A traveler will want to wear proper clothing for this time of the year to keep dry. A “wet” exposure for a period of time can result in hypothermia. People are known to use floater suits, rain suits, or even garbage bags to protect themselves from the water. Hip waders and rubber boots are quite popular this time of the year. High heels and running shoes are out.

In the spring when the snow on the ice has melted and when the sun shines 24 hours a day, Inuit try not to travel against it. A person may have to wait for the sun to start shining from another direction before traveling. People have been warned not to travel until the sun is in the right place, other wise they may risk getting hurt, losing their equipment or even their lives. A person who wishes to be around in the future listens to these warnings. A person who does not, may pay the consequences with loss of their equipment or even their lives. There is also the chance the traveler may get hit with a heavy sled. Snowmobiles could also get stuck in deep water. Spring travel can be a great deal of fun yet very dangerous.

In summary, to travel safely in the spring, listen to the locals and the Elders.

Elijah Tigullaraq

QSO

April 2010