



National Weather Service

Chicago, IL

Updated November 13, 2020

Volunteer River Ice Spotter Network



Why River Ice Spotters?

The National Weather Service relies heavily on information from river gauges to keep track of water levels across northeast Illinois and northwest Indiana. During the winter season, flooding may occur due to ice jams. Unfortunately, ice jams are often localized and river gauge information is not as helpful. Information such as the extent of the ice cover, ice cover trends, and location of ice jams is very important for issuing timely warnings. This information can only be obtained by visual observations.



Joe Gillespie, Kendall County

SAFETY

All visual observations of ice conditions should be done from a safe location only.

Never venture out on ice to take an observation.

What qualifications are required?

No special qualifications are required other than living near the river and a willingness to report river and ice conditions.

What kind of information is reported?

Reports include extent of ice cover, ice cover trends, whether or not ice jams are occurring, whether or not flooding is occurring, and the type of river ice.

How is information reported?

A Google form is used to enter routine reports. For time-sensitive information such as ice jam formation, ice jam break-up, or flooding, we provide a non-public number to call. Reports are requested from all spotters at the same time - weekly on Monday from December 1st through March 31st. Reports are requested by 9AM. Reports may also be sent at other times especially when changes are observed in river ice.

Who can be contacted for more information?

Please contact the NWS Chicago office if you are interested.

Email: nws.chicago@noaa.gov

Phone: 815-834-1435 or 815-963-5913