

# ICE-IN DECLARED

- January 4, 2018
- Published in [Local News](#)



Ice on Lake Winnepesaukee formed an interesting pattern, practically hiding a bobhouse and ice fisherman yesterday. (Courtesy Bill Hemmel/Aerialphotoh)

## *Earliest date ever declared for completely frozen lake*

By RICK GREEN, LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — Bitterly cold temperatures have led Lake Winnepesaukee to freeze over at one of the earliest dates in years, pilot David Emerson said Wednesday.

Emerson, president of Emerson Aviation, declares “ice-in” every year by flying over the lake and assessing conditions at the Mount Washington cruise ship’s five ports: Weirs Beach, Wolfeboro, Meredith, Alton Bay and Center Harbor.

He’s been closely watching New Hampshire’s largest lake and thinks the remaining open areas froze between midnight and sunrise Wednesday morning.

“In my life, this is the earliest ice-in date ever,” said Emerson, 55. “I’ve not talked to anyone who has ever seen an earlier ice-in.

“We typically say the third week of January into the first week of February is normal. This is early for sure.”

People who enjoy winter lake activities such as ice fishing, hockey and snowmobiling are very interested in when ice-in is declared, but Emerson warns that his declaration does not mean the ice is safe.

“I try to warn people,” he said. “Everything on the Mount Washington route is frozen solid, but that does not mean it is safe to go out there.

“One place may be 5 inches thick and other places may be just an inch thick. The lake is treacherous from that standpoint.”

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department advises that 4 to 6 inches of solid bluish-black ice can support a few well-dispersed people and 8 to 10 inches of that type of ice can support activities involving off-highway recreational vehicles.

The department recommends people make test holes in the ice to assess conditions and be mindful that all ice is potentially dangerous, particularly areas with current, like inlets, outlets and springs.

With heavy snow in the forecast, followed by extreme cold, the ice should build quickly, Emerson said.

Emerson took off alone from Laconia Municipal Airport at 9 a.m. Wednesday in a Cessna 172 to make his flight over the lake.

He opened a window at 4,000 feet and began taking photographs with his Canon PowerShot SX50. The single-engine airplane does not have an automatic pilot function.

“I get it trimmed up and fly hands-off when I take the pictures,” he said. “It is kind of cold when you open the window.

“There was some wind when the ice was forming and it created interesting, intricate patterns all over the lake.”

In a few months, Emerson will make flights to assess the start of “ice-out,” the time when the route of the Mount Washington is free of ice.

That usually occurs about the third week of April in the 72-square-mile lake, but it has happened as late as May in some years.

His ice-out announcement is closely anticipated by people who like to enjoy the lake when it is all liquid.

“Now it's time for ice hockey and pond hockey, and then we can have the spring back,” Emerson said.

“Everybody will be looking forward to spring after this cold snap.



The sun begins to set over a completely frozen Lake Winnepesaukee. (Courtesy Dave Emerson)