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Springtime Brings Dangers to Snowmachiners

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – As spring time bringing the much anticipated warmer temperatures it also brings melting snow and ice which leads to potential problems for snowmachiners. Some places in Alaska the snowmachiners are worried about avalanche dangers. In the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta all the way up to the Seward Peninsula, a different potentially deadly issue presents itself: open leads and weak ice on the rivers.

Since the end of March, at least three incidents have occurred where snowmachiners and ATV operators found themselves in deadly plights. One of them is presumed deceased after he went missing during a ground blizzard near Elim. Tracks were found leading up to an open lead. Efforts to find him have only turned up his snowmachine. In Bethel, a man was killed when his four-wheeler went into soft ice. And in Unalakleet, a man was able to escape with his life after he unexpectedly broke through river ice.

“Unfortunately it is that time of year when we have to respond to folks lost in the ocean, rivers and lakes around western Alaska due to open leads and soft ice,” said Alaska State Trooper Captain Barry Wilson, Commander of C Detachment. “All of our search and rescue groups are reminding the residence to use an abundance of caution while traveling between communities.”

Snowmachiners are encouraged to be very cautious on their trips into the mountains or across rivers. Always check conditions before heading out and leave behind a detailed trip plan so potential searchers know where to check for you if you fail to reach your destination on time. Snowmachiners are advised to never set out alone. If you find yourself in a tight spot, your best chance of a rescue comes from the people you are with you.

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