

“STAY CLEAR! STAY SAFE” AS WARM WEATHER MELTS SNOW
Spring-like conditions mean dangerous ice and fast, cold water

With spring like temperatures this week, The Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and Ontario Power Generation (OPG) are urging people to exercise extreme care around Ontario waterways, particularly those that are near hydroelectric stations and dams.

“Our message is: Stay Clear! Stay Safe! The warm temperatures and rainfall will create conditions you’d expect to see in the spring, not February,” said John Murphy, OPG’s Executive Vice President Hydroelectric. “This could result in ice that’s thinner than expected and water flows that are higher and faster than normal,” he added.

OPP Sergeant Karen Harrington added: “Earlier this week a large number of people had to be rescued from an ice flow on Lake Erie, so this is a very real danger. People cannot last long when they fall into icy waters”.

Most hydroelectric facilities are remotely controlled by operators who may be kilometers away. To meet the fluctuating demand for electricity throughout the day, these operators open or close dams or start or stop generators as needed. This causes frequent and rapid changes in the water flow and levels often creating strong undertows, turbulence and sudden, powerful gushes of water moving downstream in what was once calm looking surface water.

All waterways where an OPG dam or hydroelectric station is located have well-positioned warning signs, buoys, fences, booms and barriers. “We urge everyone to obey these warning signs and barriers,” Murphy said. “They are there for the public’s safety and to let everyone know that the areas around the signs are dangerous, so stay clear.”

Harrington noted that the warm weather may bring more people outside, and that people stay away from the edge of waterways where footing may be slippery; do not wade into moving water; be aware of changing water levels or any sign of increased currents and always stay a safe distance outside of warnings and barriers.

OPG offers the public a number of educational materials on water safety around dams and hydroelectric stations including a brochure, a DVD for adults and an educational interactive computer game for children. The OPP and OPG also have a television ad that warns people to stay clear, and stay safe near hydroelectric dams and stations. You can view the ad, or request free educational materials by visiting www.opg.com

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