

PLATE 19. FREEZE-UP AND BREAK-UP OF RIVERS AND LAKES

Introduction

The four maps on the accompanying plate depict, in a general way, the average dates on which freshwater bodies in Canada become completely ice-covered in the fall, and become completely ice-free in the spring. The formation of an ice cover on a water body is called freeze-up; and the melting and disappearance of this ice cover is called break-up.

Freeze-up begins when surface water is cooled to 0°C and ice crystals begin to form; it ends when the water body has attained its maximum ice coverage. Most lakes freeze over completely; rivers may or may not, depending on their location, size, and flow characteristics. The final stage of the freeze-up process may be termed "freeze-over".

Break-up normally begins when air temperatures rise above 0°C, and surface and internal melting of the ice sheet begins. The process is aided by the action of winds and currents, which results in mechanical breaking of the ice. Break-up ends when the water body becomes completely clear of all ice. Many rivers and lakes in the Arctic region, however, may never become completely ice free because of the shortness of the melting season.

Data Collection and Map Compilation
Maps 19A and 19B display the isochrones (time lines) of the mean dates on which rivers and lakes respectively become completely frozen over.

The basic data used in the preparation of these maps were recorded at stations operated by or for the Atmospheric Environment Service (AES). A regular program to observe the dates on which significant events in the freeze-up and break-up processes occur was instituted in 1956 at weather stations across Canada.

The stations whose data (up to the spring of 1973) were used in the analysis are shown on the accompanying maps by means of a symbol which indicates the length of the station's record.

Additional references [3-13] have been included for those wishing details on specific freeze-up and break-up studies conducted in various parts of the country.

Acknowledgments
The maps and text were prepared by W.T.R. Allen of the Atmospheric Environment Service, Department of Fisheries and the Environment.

Selected References
[1] Allen, W.T.R. and Cudbird, B.S.V. 1971. Freeze-up and break-up dates of water bodies in Canada. Atmospheric Environment Service, Department of the Environment, Toronto.

Interpretation
The maps depict only a very generalized pattern of the occurrence of freeze-over and ice clearance. The isolines were, for the most part, constructed objectively, being based solely on the mean dates for the water bodies for which information was available [1,2].

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