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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Revised Sledding Ordinance Goes Into Effect**

### ***Residents can also request additional areas be approved for sledding***

DUBUQUE, Iowa — Dubuque has joined a growing list of communities across the country that are taking steps to address liability and safety concerns related to sledding on city-owned properties. A revised City of Dubuque ordinance limiting sledding on city-owned property to two parks that was adopted at Monday’s City Council meeting went into effect today. The ordinance only applies to activities on city-owned properties and does NOT apply to private property or public property owned by other governmental entities.

The ordinance was revised due to safety and liability concerns and does not ban sledding but instead restricts sledding, downhill skiing, snowboarding, or tobogganing on city-owned property to certain areas within Bunker Hill Golf Course and Allison-Henderson Park designated by signage. Additionally, the ordinance prohibits riding inner tubes on city-owned public property.

Communities across the country are considering similar restrictions after accidents on city-owned property resulted in significant injuries, lawsuits, and large financial settlements against some communities in recent years. Examples include Boone, Iowa (\$12 million); Sioux City, Iowa (\$2.75 million); and Omaha, Nebraska (\$2.4 million).

State code grants immunity to cities for skateboarding, inline skating, bicycling, unicycling, scootering, river rafting, canoeing, and kayaking but it does not for sledding and other

associated winter activities. City officials have asked state legislators to address this gap and add winter activities to this list to limit the liability of municipalities. The intent of the amendment to Dubuque's ordinance is not just to avoid a lawsuit, but also to avoid serious injuries to residents by limiting sledding to areas where the city has an opportunity to create as safe an area as possible.

"We want Dubuquers to continue to enjoy outdoor activities in our parks year-round and we understand that sledding, especially on Bunker Hill, is a very popular activity," said Leisure Services Manager Marie Ware. "Our goal in restricting sledding to the designated areas is to help our residents enjoy sledding in a safe manner while minimizing the city's liability."

Dubuque residents requesting that additional city-owned parks and property be approved for sledding can submit those requests to the leisure services department for consideration. A printable request form, in addition to details and background information on the sledding ordinance amendment, is available at [www.cityofdubuque.org/sledding](http://www.cityofdubuque.org/sledding).

Those requests will be reviewed by the City's Leisure Services Department staff for safety considerations. If those provisions are met, the request will be recommended to the parks and recreation commission, which would consider making a recommendation to the City Council for amending the ordinance to include additional areas. The ordinance amendment approved on Jan. 5 by the City Council was first approved by the parks and recreation commission before being considered by the City Council. Ware added that safe sledding areas require inspections, ongoing evaluations, and maintenance throughout the season. "While we do not have the resources to do that for all of our other 47 parks, we will certainly consider requests on a case-by-case basis," she said.

Sledding in city parks other than designated areas within Allison-Henderson Park and Bunker Hill Golf Course is considered trespassing. Violators will be informed of the ordinance and warned. Repeated violations could result in a civil infraction. For additional information, please call the City of Dubuque Leisure Services Department at 563-589-4263.

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