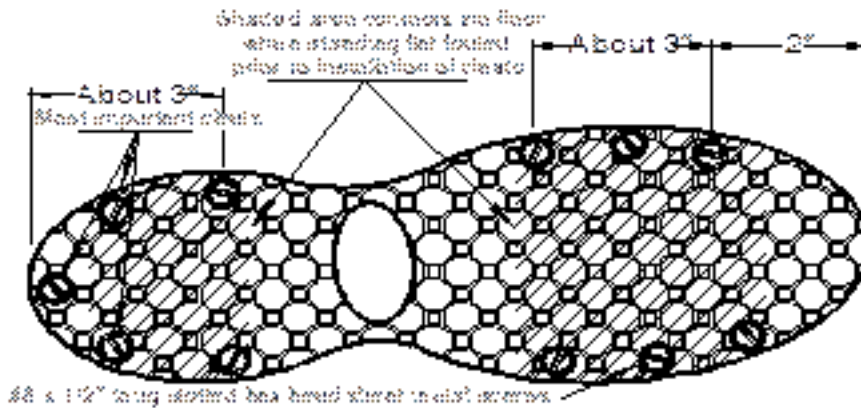


Ice – Converting old boots into ice boots.

The statistic boggled Joe Visitorski's mind: about a million Americans are injured annually by falling on snow or ice, and about 17,000 of these injuries are fatal. Hikers are especially exposed to this hazard because they spend so much time outdoors. Joe's solution is to wear a hockey helmet and thick padding when he hikes in winter. He still falls, but he bounces, and it's kind of fun.

Sporting goods stores sell clamp-on devices that attach to boots and improve traction. Some use springs, chains, or metal studs to grip the ice. These all work, but there can be problems; springs or chains can snag roots and debris on trails. Wet snow can clog them and then freeze. Excessively worn studs can even increase the likelihood of slipping on hard ice. Studs screwed directly into the soles of hiking boots, on the other hand, are easy to replace when worn, don't fall off, and won't collect ice, snag roots, or require adjustment. Here's an inexpensive way to convert old hiking boots to ice boots.

At a hardware store, buy 22 slotted hex head sheet metal screws, #8 x 1/2". Use a 1/4" hex nut driver, or a 1/4" socket wrench on an electric screwdriver, to install the screws into the soles of your hiking boots, as shown in the illustration. The screws should be about 3/8" in from the edge of the soles. Adjust the spacing so that the screws are driven into the existing rubber cleats on the boots.



By Ron Konieczynski