

Man claims self-defense in Alton Bay ice-fishing shooting

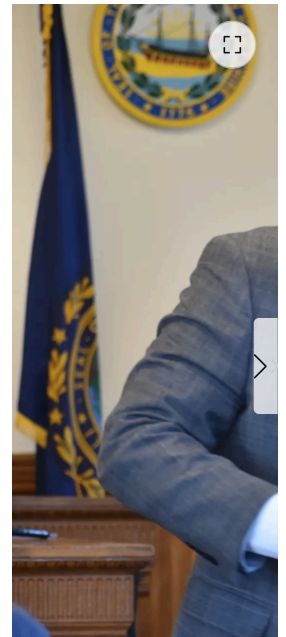
At Christopher Johnson's trial, his attorney says he fired at an ice fisherman's SUV in self-defense after it slid into his Alton Bay bob-house.



Gabriel Perry
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Attorneys conference with Belknap County Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Leonard during the opening day of Christopher Johnson's trial on Monday. GABRIEL PERRY/UNION LEADER



Assistant County Attorney Johnson in Belknap

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The attorney for an Alton man [accused of shooting into another man's vehicle over an ice-fishing dispute](#) argued the shots were fired in self-defense.

Christopher Johnson, 53, was indicted in May 2025 on a felony charge of reckless conduct with a deadly weapon in Alton Bay on Feb. 22, 2025. Monday was the opening day for his trial in Belknap County Superior Court in Laconia.

"This case is about rage," Assistant County Attorney Alexander Smeaton said while delivering his opening arguments. "Specifically, that the defendant was enraged that Karl Ingoldsby accidentally skidded into his bob-house with a Toyota 4Runner."

Prosecutors said Johnson, who was ice fishing on Peggy's Cove, became enraged after Karl Ingoldsby, 60, who was also ice fishing with his son and others, parked his vehicle close to Johnson's bob-house that morning.

Ingoldsby said he chose to do so because his own bob-house was surrounded by deep snow and he doubted the 4Runner could make it through.

Johnson had plowed the area near his bob-house.

Ingoldsby said he parked about 30 feet away from Johnson's bob-house that day, and that his bob-house was a great distance from Johnson's.



Ingoldsby and others in his party noticed holes drilled in the ice around his SUV and interpreted the holes as an attempt to sink the vehicle.

An argument ensued.

When Ingoldsby attempted to drive his SUV away from Johnson's bob-house, he became stuck in the deep, slushy conditions. While navigating the challenging terrain, his 4Runner slid on the ice and hit the front door of Johnson's bob-house and the impact broke it off its hinges.

That's when Johnson allegedly fired five rounds from a 9 mm handgun into the front of the Toyota driven by Ingoldsby.

Ingoldsby told jurors he realized he had slid into the bob-house, heard loud bangs and saw his windshield was cracked.

"Then I realized I was getting shot at. That's what that was," Ingoldsby said Monday on the stand.

On Monday, Johnson sat quietly, wearing a blue-gray button-down shirt and dark pants, as his attorney, Stephen Jeffco, delivered his opening argument.

"It's my honor to represent Mr. Johnson on what undoubtedly is the most important day of his life," Jeffco said.

Jeffco told jurors that Johnson was born and raised in Rochester and left school in the 11th grade to go to work. He moved to Alton, a small Lakes Region town on the southeastern end of Lake Winnepesaukee that is renowned for its fishing, boating and an ice runway that operates in the winter months.

Johnson has been a hunter since he was 16 years old.

"What's fairly important to him is his Second Amendment rights, his right to keep and bear firearms," Jeffco said. "An avid hunter, he's owned firearms all of his life and he handles them safely."

Jeffco suggested to jurors that the holes Johnson apparently drilled around the 4Runner and first spotted by Ingoldsby's son, could have been for "jigs" or "tip-outs," common mechanisms used by ice fishermen.

Jeffco said Johnson fired into the vehicle driven by Ingoldsby over a legitimate fear for his own life and the life of his dogs. Johnson was "trying to disable" the vehicle, Jeffco said.

"Yeah, I shot at the vehicle," Jeffco said in describing what Johnson told police after the incident. "You were trying to kill me and my dogs."

Under direct examination, Ingoldsby said that he and Johnson weren't strangers before the incident, and had even exchanged niceties earlier in the day.

Though they weren't friends, there was no animosity between the two, he said.

"I've known him approximately 30 years," Ingoldsby said.

Ingoldsby's son, Hudson, saw the first hole drilled behind the 4Runner and told his father about it when he arrived at their bob house, which Hudson Ingoldsby estimated was about 300 feet away from Johnson's bob house.

Soon after, they noticed additional holes surrounding the vehicle. That's when the elder Ingoldsby approached Johnson's bob house to speak with him about the holes before attempting to move the SUV away.



"I mean, he was upset, he got shot at, like I imagine anybody would be," said Hudson Ingoldsby when asked by Jeffco about his father's state of mind following the altercation.

Karl Ingoldsby said he believed Johnson was trying to sink their 4Runner that day.

"Sir," Ingoldsby told Jeffco under cross-examination. "We were standing in a foot of water when we were talking to State Police."

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