



## Get the Facts: Snowmobile Safety

### In a Nutshell

Snowmobiles are a symbol of Minnesota winter, but their use carries specific risks and the need for safety education.

### What should I know to before I ride?

With over 22,000 miles of public and private snowmobile trails, Minnesota is a mecca for sledding enthusiasts. As with any motor vehicle, driving a snowmobile requires alertness, skill and common sense.

Know the laws. Anyone over the age of 18 may register and operate a snowmobile. There are restrictions for riders under age 18. If you were born after Dec. 31, 1976, you must have a Snowmobile Safety Certificate before you can legally operate a snowmobile. Even if you're older than that, or a novice, consider taking a certification course. It can help make you a better rider.

### Riding safely

- Stay on marked trails. Minnesota's snowmobile clubs work hard to maintain good riding conditions on the state's trails. Riders on groomed trails are less likely to hit obstacles or trespass onto private property.
- Leave the booze at home. Riding under the influence is one of two main factors in crashes and plays a role in about 60% of those that are fatal. If your blood alcohol concentration is .08 or greater you will be charged with snowmobiling under the influence.
- Watch your speed. Excess speed is another major crash factor. Many serious and fatal crashes happen when a speeding snowmobiler loses control or strikes an object.
- Be careful on the ice. Make sure there's at least 5 to 7 inches of new, clear ice to support the weight of a snowmobile and rider.
- Always pre-trip your machine. Be prepared for any emergency. Pack a tool kit with essential tools and spare parts, as well as a basic first aid kit and survival kit similar to that you carry in your car.

*During the 2020-21 snowmobile season Minnesota recorded 90 accidents with three fatalities and 73 injuries.*

*The top three accidents causes were striking a fixed object (40%), driver thrown (16%) and equipment rollover (13%).*



- Helmets are mandatory for operators and riders aged 18 and under. A helmet protects the operator's head from injury in the event of a crash. Face shields protect against snow, wind, brush or branches.
- Cold weather can be dangerous. Dress in insulating layers that allow for freedom of movement, topped by a wind-resistant outer layer. Add appropriate warm boots and mitts as fingers and toes are especially susceptible to cold.

### **Be a good steward**

- Tread lightly. Be aware of the impact your sport has on the environment. Minnesota law prohibits the use of metal studded tracks on DNR paved trails. Always wait until there is enough snow cover to protect both the environment and your sled. Pack your trash; littering is both illegal and inconsiderate.

**Sources:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
AAA Michigan  
Bombardier Inc.  
International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association

