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## SNOWMOBILE SAFETY

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 a number of restrictions for those under the age of 18. Anyone born after December 31, 1976 must possess a Snowmobile Safety Certificate before they may legally operate a snowmobile. Even if you're older than that, or a novice rider, consider taking a certification course; it can help make you an ever better rider.
- Know your machine and what specific equipment (headlights, taillights, brakes, mufflers, reflector material) is required in Minnesota when operating on public lands, waters or highways. Have your machine checked by a professional before going on the first ride of the season.
- Ride only on the groomed portion of designated trails or on private land where you have permission. Check with local authorities if you are unsure where to legally operate your machine.
- Never enter a frozen body of water unless you are absolutely sure the ice is at least 6 inches thick. Snowmobiles are not designed to float. Consider wearing a buoyant snowmobile suit and carry a set of ice claws with you.
- Always pre-trip your machine before heading out. Be prepared for any emergency. Pack a tool kit with basic tools and spare parts as well as a basic first aid kit and survival kit similar to what you carry in your car.
- Ride sober. A snowmobile is a motor vehicle, just like a car, and is subject to many of the same laws. If your blood alcohol concentration is .08 or greater you will be charged with snowmobiling under the influence. A conservation officer, sheriff or other peace officer is authorized to pull you over if they have good reason to suspect you are operating under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Slow down. Speed limits are posted for a reason. In Minnesota it's illegal to operate a snowmobile in excess of 50 mph on any public lands or waters or in excess of posted trail limits. It is also illegal to operate at a speed greater than the various trail, terrain and visibility conditions dictate.
- Pay attention to signs. Snowmobile trail signs are similar to road signs because they alert the rider to conditions. These markers indicate whether or not snowmobiles are permitted, whether a trail is a one- or two-way trail, and when an intersection is approaching. Riders also employ hand signals to indicate turns or stopping.
- Dress in insulating layers that will allow for freedom of movement, ending in a wind-resistant outer layer. Make sure you wear appropriate warm boots and mitts, because fingers and toes are especially susceptible to cold. A helmet is an invaluable piece of equipment and is mandatory for operators and riders age 18 and under. A helmet protects the operator's head from injury in the event of a crash and one with a



MINNESOTA SAFETY COUNCIL

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face shield protects against snow, wind, bush or branches.

- 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.

For additional information, including laws regarding registration, equipment and trail riding, visit the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/s>  
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snowmobiling/index.html>

**Acknowledgments:**

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

AAA Michigan

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