

SNOWMOBILE SAFETY

There are 6,400 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in Michigan. As the interest and participation in this sport increases, so does the incidence of preventable injury and death. Those at the Safe Riders! Snowmobile Safety Awareness Program say it about the best it can be said. "A snowmobile is only as safe as the person operating it. The key to safe operation is knowing your snowmobile, using good judgment, and courtesy." The Michigan Snowmobile Association has also been a leader in the effort to promote safe snowmobiling here in Michigan, and making it a safe sport for the entire family. Although the incidence of alcohol involvement in preventable snowmobiling fatalities and injuries is well documented, especially in 19-34 year old males, the MSA believes that the majority of snowmobilers do operate their machines in a safe, sober and courteous manner. The snowmobiling community as a whole has endorsed a 0.0 percent blood alcohol content as the only acceptable level while riding a snowmobile. But we need to know that preventable injury and death is not only the end result of alcohol or drug use. Safe operation of a snowmobile starts long before one gets on the machine and turns the key. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources offers a great deal of information on their website regarding safe snowmobiling. Below is a list of some of those safety hints:

- Always keep your machine in top mechanical condition.
- Always wear insulated boots and protective clothing including a helmet, gloves and eye protection.
- Never ride alone.
- Avoid, when possible, crossing frozen bodies of water.
- Never operate in a single file when crossing frozen bodies of water.
- Always be alert to avoid fences and low strung wires.
- Never operate on a street or highway.
- Always look for depressions in the snow.
- Keep headlights and tail lights on at all times.
- When approaching an intersection, come to a complete stop, raise off the seat and look for traffic.
- Always check the weather conditions before you depart

DO's:

Avoid riding on frozen waterways when possible

Reduce speeds when approaching corners

Be aware of unmarked hazards or obstacles hidden beneath the snow

At night, wear reflective clothing and reduce your speed

Obey posted speed limits

Be familiar with the area where you snowmobile. Tell someone your plans

Know the local hazards and weather conditions

Be familiar with the characteristics of your snowmobile and it's limitations

DON'TS:

Do not operate at high speeds, especially near houses, buildings, livestock, wildlife, trailheads or other recreationalists

Do not use alcohol or drugs

Do not overload a snowmobile or ride double unless the snowmobile is designed for 2 passengers

Avoid getting too close to other snowmobiles

For additional information access the Michigan DNR website at www.michigan.gov/dnr