

# Wisconsin Snowmobile Laws



This pamphlet is not a complete set of snowmobile laws. However, it supplies the essential information. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions, contact the Department of Natural Resources personnel or your local law enforcement authorities.

Check with local governing agencies for local ordinances.

## **The Future of Snowmobiling in Wisconsin Depends On You Ride Responsibly**

Department of Natural Resources P.O. Box 7921  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

For snowmobile safety information, visit our web site at;  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/> and search "snowmobile"



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## Contents

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Accidents.....	13
Age Restrictions & Certificate Requirements.....	6
Dealers.....	5
Definitions.....	19
Distance and Hours Restrictions.....	10
Enforcement.....	14
Equipment—Brakes, Lights and Exhaust Requirements.....	12
Ethics Code.....	15
Exhaust.....	12
FAQs.....	22
How to Register.....	4
Operation Rules.....	9
Landowner Information.....	15
Lights.....	12
Local Ordinances—Town, City or County Rules.....	16
Nonresidents, Registration Requirements.....	3
Races.....	13
Registration Types.....	3
Roads.....	8
Routes.....	10
Safety Code.....	15
Signs.....	17
Snowmobiling under the Influence, Alcohol/Drugs.....	9
Speed Limits.....	10
Studs or cleats for tracks.....	12
Trail Signs and Standards.....	16
Trailer Information.....	14
Trail Pass Requirement.....	3
DNR and Validation stations.....	23

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## Snowmobile Clubs/Organizations

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The development and maintenance of Wisconsin's extensive network of snowmobile trails is accomplished through the efforts of thousands of snowmobile club members and private citizens. Their volunteer time is spent performing the crucial tasks of negotiating with landowners for trail easements (70% of the trails are on private lands), pre-season preparation, brushing, grading, signing the trails, trail grooming, safety inspections of the trails and fund raising to support the trail projects.

Please consider joining a snowmobile club—your help is needed. By staying on the trail, you show your respect for the hard work of the local clubs and the rights of the property owners who have graciously allowed snowmobiling across their land. For information on joining a club visit: [www.awsc.org](http://www.awsc.org)

☛ **Helpful Tips noted with this symbol**

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## Registration

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All snowmobiles operated in Wisconsin must be registered.

**Residents**—As a resident of Wisconsin, you have two main options of registering your snowmobile.

- **Public registration**—Allows you to operate your snowmobile on any area open to public riding and on private property with the appropriate permission. Public registrations are valid for 2 years, which begins July 1 and expires June 30 two years later. The proof of registration must be carried with you while riding and must be presented to an enforcement officer when requested. Fee—\$30.
- **Private registration**—Allows a private property owner to register a snowmobile for his/her use or an immediate family member's use. However, the snowmobile can only be used on the owner's/immediate family member's private property or lands leased by the owner/immediate family member. The proof of registration must be carried with you while riding and must be presented to an enforcement officer when requested. Fee—\$0.

**Display**—Unless there is an exception, your snowmobile must display current registration decals, which must be prominently visible on both sides of the cowling.



**Nonresidents**—As a nonresident, you may operate your snowmobile in Wisconsin with your state's current registration as long as the decal or proof of registration is prominently displayed and the snowmobile and the machine has not been in Wisconsin for more than 15 consecutive days. The proof of registration from your home state must be carried with you while riding and must be presented to an enforcement officer when requested. However, you should be aware that an out of state registered snowmobile that is in Wisconsin for longer than 15 days must be registered in Wisconsin.

- **Trail Pass** - In addition, an out of state registered snowmobile must display a Wisconsin Non-resident Snowmobile Trail Pass anytime it is ridden on the trails. Non-resident Snowmobile Trail Passes are available from many agent locations throughout the state, DNR Service Centers when open for counter service, or by calling 1-888-936-7463. For a list of agents where snowmobile trail passes are sold, and for a list of Service Centers and the hours of operation, please visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov). The Non-resident Snowmobile Trail Pass is valid for one and must be displayed directly on the front of the snowmobile windshield. Once attached, it cannot be transferred to any other snowmobile. Fee - \$35

**Antique registrations**—Snowmobiles, built in 1966 or earlier, may be registered as an antique. This registration is available for Wisconsin residents only and does not expire as long as the applicant owns the machine. Fee—\$20.

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## How do I register my snowmobile?

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There are three ways to complete an original, transfer, or renewal of a snowmobile registration, or to request replacement decals and/or certificate cards:

**Online** - The DNR site provides a secure, easy and convenient method to register your recreational vehicle. Online registration allows you to complete your snowmobile registration transactions from the snowmobile you currently own, or to register recently purchased snowmobiles. The online site provides a Temporary Operating Receipt that you may use to ride your snowmobile prior to receiving the registration decals in the mail. Visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and select Boat-ATV-Snowmobile Registration link under Online Services.

**Agents** - Locate an agent near you to complete your registration needs. Registration Agents can process boat, ATV and snowmobile registrations (renewals, transfers, originals, and print replacement decals.) Registration Agents can provide you with certificate and decals for an additional fee. For complete list of Vehicle Registration Agents, Validation Agents and DNR Service Centers go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search using the words "Registration Agent."

**By Mail** - Complete the Snowmobile Registration Application Form (9400-210), make a photocopy, and mail the original application and appropriate fees to the address provided on the form. The Snowmobile Registration Application (Form 940-210) is available from DNR Service Centers, by calling 1-888-936-7463 or you can download and print a copy from our website at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)

**Snowmobiles Purchased from a Wisconsin Dealer** - At the time of the sale, the Wisconsin Snowmobile Dealer will complete and submit a snowmobile registration application. Your copy of the application form signed by the dealer or a validated receipt must be carried with you while operating the snowmobile until your decal and registration certificate arrive in the mail. If the Wisconsin Dealer is also an authorized Vehicle Registration Agent, the dealer, for an additional fee, may provide you with the certificate and decals.

**Snowmobiles Purchased from a Private Party or Out-Of-State Dealer** - Choose one of the registration options from the previous page to complete the registration. You can obtain your decals and registration certificate at a registration Agent. If you use a Validation Agent you must carry your validated receipt while operating until your registration card and decals arrive in the mail. The seller must give you the signed certificate or a bill of sale at the time of the transaction.

**Lost or destroyed registrations** - Choose one of the registration options on the previous page to apply for a replacement certificate card or expiration decal.

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## Transfer of Ownership

- **Snowmobiles Already Registered in Wisconsin** - Choose one of the registration options on the previous page to apply for transfer of ownership within 10 days after purchase. If the previous owner's registration is not current, you must apply for transfer of ownership and renew the registration before operation. You must carry your validated receipt while operating until your registration card and decals arrive in the mail.
- **Snowmobile Not Previously Registered in Wisconsin** - Choose one of the registration options on the previous page to apply for original Wisconsin registration prior to operation. You must carry your validated receipt while operating until your registration card and decals arrive in the mail.
- **When you sell or transfer ownership** of a snowmobile, you must sign the registration certificate and give it to the new owner at the time of sale or transfer.

**Change of address** - Within 15 days of changing your address, you must notify the DNR stating your new address and the certificate number for the machine you own. This process is important to complete so that you receive a registration renewal notification by mail. You can either call the Call Center at 1-888-936-7463, e-mail to [csweb@wi.gov](mailto:csweb@wi.gov) or go to our on-line services at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov).

**Junked snowmobiles** - If you are going to junk a snowmobile, write "Junked" across the face of the certificate and return the certificate to the DNR.

**Dealer Registration** - If you are a snowmobile manufacturer, dealer, distributor, rental agency, or any combination thereof and operate this business within this state, you must register with the DNR and obtain a commercial snowmobile certificate. The DNR will then issue you 3 reflectorized plates. You must attach one plate in a clearly visible place on each snowmobile that you lease, offer for rent, offer for sale or otherwise allow to be operated as part of your business. Fee \$90. You can purchase additional plates from the DNR. Fee—\$30 per plate.

**Exemptions to registration** — Snowmobiles are exempt from Wisconsin registration if:

- The snowmobile is used exclusively for racing on a racing facility.
- The snowmobile is owned by the United States or a political subdivision of the state and used for enforcement or emergency purposes. The name and owner of the snowmobile must be displayed on the cowling.
- The snowmobile is registered under a DNR agreement with a Federally registered Indian Tribe or Band and operated for less than 15 days off of the reservation boundary.

## Age Restrictions and Certificate Requirements

Any person who is at least 12 years old and who is born on or after January 1, 1985 is required to possess a valid Snowmobile Safety Certificate in order to operate a snowmobile on public trails, lands or frozen waters. You must carry the certificate while riding and you must display it to a law enforcement officer when requested.

All snowmobilers under age 16 must obtain certification in a classroom certification course. Internet certification is only available to persons 16 years of age and up.

Age	Certificate Required	Exceptions
Born before 1/1/1985	No	
Born on or after 1/1/1985, but at least 12	Yes	No certificate is required for persons operating on* lands owned or leased by the operator's parent or guardian. * This does not include land leased by an organization of which the operator, operator's parents or guardians are members.
Under age 12	No	A parent, guardian, or person 18 years old or older must accompany the child on the (same) snowmobile when operating on public areas. No certificate or adult accompaniment is required for persons operating on* lands owned or leased by the operator's parent or guardian. * This does not include land leased by an organization of which the operator, operator's parents or guardians are members.

A Snowmobile Safety Certificate can be obtained by taking a DNR Sponsored Snowmobile Safety Course. Local courses are typically offered in the late fall and early winter by volunteer instructors. Visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "snowmobile classes" to find upcoming classes in your area. Wisconsin honors certificates from all other state and provincial sponsored courses.

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**Snowmobile Safety Certification** may be obtained by successfully completing a DNR sponsored snowmobile safety course. Volunteer instructors typically offer local courses early spring through fall.

- Snowmobile courses are advertised in our local newspaper at various times of the year. If you want to enroll in a snowmobile safety course, contact the DNR Call Center at 1-888-936-7463 or visit us on the web to find an instructor who is currently advertising a class.

**[dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)** and search for "snowmobile safety"

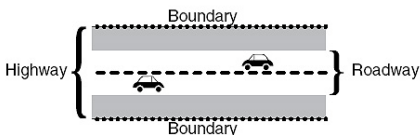
- A new internet safety certification course is also available. If completing the online class, you must print out the receipt confirming your successful completion of the course and carry it with you until you receive your safety certificate from the DNR.
- Prior to Enrolling in a Safety Class you must obtain a DNR Customer Identification (Account) Number. If you purchased a Wisconsin fishing or hunting license in the past, you already have a customer account. Inspect your DNR approvals (hunting license, fishing license, etc.) for your ID Number.
  1. This nine-digit number must be assigned to you by the DNR
  2. It must be unique, you cannot use another person's number or you will not receive your certificate
  3. You may quickly obtain an ID number by calling **1-888-936-7463** or visiting a DNR Service Center
  4. If you are not sure if you have an ID number assigned to you, double-check first by calling **1-888-936-7463**

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## Roads

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You cannot operate a snowmobile upon any part of any freeway, which is a part of the federal system of interstate and defense highways or on any part of any other freeway unless the DOT authorizes snowmobile use on that freeway.



Under most circumstances you cannot operate a snowmobile on any highway or road.

You can ride directly across any roadway having fewer than 5 lanes, but only after stopping and yielding the right-of-way to all vehicles approaching on the roadway. Crossings under this exception may be made only at a place where no obstruction prevents a quick and safe crossing. For purposes of this exception, "obstruction" includes, but is not limited to impairment of view and dangerous roadway conditions.

You can ride directly across a roadway having 5 lanes, in the manner specified above, but only if the DOT authorizes the crossing.

You can ride on any roadway, which is not normally maintained for other vehicle traffic by the removal of snow.

Unless it's prohibited and posted by the road's maintaining authority, you can ride on the roadway of highways to cross a bridge, culvert or railroad right-of-way, but only after yielding the right-of-way to all vehicle traffic.

You can ride on the roadway of county or town highways and city or village streets for authorized snowmobile events such as races or derbies.

You may operate a snowmobile next to a roadway with due regard to safety in the following manner:

- Along U.S. numbered highways, state and county highways at a distance of 10 or more feet from the roadway. Travel on the median of a divided highway is prohibited except to cross.
- Along town highways outside of the roadway. See the definition of a town highway in the definitions.
- During daylight hours, you may travel in either direction regardless of the flow of vehicle traffic.
- At night, you must travel in the same direction as vehicle traffic in the nearest lane unless the snowmobile trail is located at least 40 feet from the roadway or the trail is separated from the roadway by a head lamp barrier and the snowmobile trail is approved by the DOT.



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Other than a freeway, whenever it's impractical to gain immediate access to a snowmobile area next to the highway, you may operate your snowmobile next to and parallel to the roadway for the purpose of gaining access to and from the area of operation. Loading or unloading your snowmobile must be done with due regard to safety at the nearest practical point to the area of operation.

Snowmobiles traveling next to a roadway must observe roadway speed limits or speed limits as posted.

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## **Rules for Operating a Snowmobile**

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### **Small Snowmobile Rules**

Small snowmobiles of any size must be registered and may only be operated by a child at least age 12 that has a snowmobile safety certificate.

The exception is that a small snowmobile with an engine of 4 horsepower or less may be driven by a child of any age; without a safety certificate while operating in sanctioned races, derbies, competitions, exhibitions or only on private property.

A child may only recreationally ride a small snowmobile on a trail or frozen waterway if they are at least age 12 and have a snowmobile safety certificate.

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## **Alcohol and Drugs**

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It is illegal to operate a snowmobile under the influence of alcohol or drugs while on any property that is held open to the public (generally this means—trails, routes, lakes/rivers or corridors).

- Wisconsin's maximum blood alcohol concentration limit is 0.08% and the limit is strictly enforced. However, a person can be under the influence of alcohol and in violation at lesser concentrations. Avoid alcohol altogether while riding.

You are required to provide a sample of your breath or blood if an officer has probable cause to believe you are operating a snowmobile under the influence. By operating a snowmobile on areas open to the public you have automatically consented to provide a sample of your breath, blood or urine to an officer who requests the test. If you refuse to provide a breath, blood or urine sample, you will be charged with an additional violation.

- Each year, serious injuries or deaths occur after snowmobile operators decide to ride after drinking alcoholic beverages. Alcohol slows your reaction time and distorts your judgment.
- Due to recent legislation, riding with a detectable amount of an illegal drug has been enhanced.

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## Routes

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You can ride on highways which have been designated as routes and which are identified by signs. See the definition of a route in the back of this booklet.



- Towns, cities or villages may designate state trunk bridges, a sidewalk or one lane of the bridge as a snowmobile route.
- When a town, city or village designates a highway as snowmobile route for snowmobile operation, you must observe the following rules:
  - ▷ Snowmobiles must be operated on the extreme right side of the roadway.
  - ▷ Left turns must be made as safely as possible from any position depending on snow cover and other prevailing conditions.
  - ▷ You must yield right-of-way to other vehicle traffic and pedestrians.

If a town, city or village allows the “Purpose of Residential Access” or the “Purpose of Access from Lodging” a snowmobile may be operated on a portion of the roadway or shoulder of a highway, but only after observing roadway speed limits. Check with your local officials to see if an ordinance exists before you ride. Riding on roads illegally is the most common violation. Stick to the trails and snowmobile routes.

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## Distance, Hours and Speed Restrictions

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When you are riding a snowmobile within 100-feet of a person who is not on a snowmobile, or in or on a vehicle, or when you are riding within 100-feet of an ice fishing shanty, you must slow your snowmobile to 10-mph or less and yield the right-of-way, except when you are operating on a privately owned raceway facility.

When you are riding a snowmobile between the hours of 10:30 p.m. and 7:00 am and you are riding within 150 feet of a home or dwelling, you must slow your snowmobile to 10-mph or less.

**IMPORTANT:** It is unlawful for any person to operate a snowmobile in excess 55 miles per hour during the hours of darkness. This would be applicable to all areas (public and private) statewide.

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## Other Prohibited Operation and Requirements

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You can't operate a snowmobile at speeds that are unreasonable or improper.

- When riding at speeds above 40-mph at night, you begin to override your snowmobile's headlight.

You can't operate a snowmobile in a careless manner so that it endangers a person or property.

You can't operate a snowmobile on a person's private property without their consent or the lessee's consent. Failure to post the property does not give you the authority to ride there.

- One of the most common trespass violations is cutting trail corners when the trail crosses private property. Stay on the trail and do not create shortcuts.

You must obey all regulatory signs such as; stop signs, yield signs and speed limit signs.

- Under rare circumstances when you are permitted on a roadway, you must comply with all posted roadway speed limits.

You can't operate a snowmobile on forest nursery planting area or on public lands, which are posted or reasonably identified as an area of forest plant reproduction.

You can't operate a snowmobile on a ski area, slide or skating area except at marked locations or after stopping and yielding the right of way.

You can't operate a snowmobile on or across a cemetery, burial ground, school or church without the consent of the owner.

You can't operate a snowmobile on an operating airport or landing facility without consent.

You can't operate a snowmobile on Native American lands without the consent of the tribal governing body.

You can't allow a person to operate a snowmobile if he or she has not obtained the required safety certificate, or if they are incapable of operating a snowmobile because of a physical or mental disability, or the person is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

You can't transport a firearm or bow on a snowmobile unless the firearm is unloaded and encased or the bow is unstrung or in a carrying case.

Effective 11-01-2011, Openly Exposed handguns may be transported on a snowmobile while loaded.

You can't drive, push, pursue or chase any animal with a snowmobile except that you can use a snowmobile for normal farming/herding operations; however, no wildlife can be chased.

You can't refuse to stop your snowmobile after being requested or signaled to do so by a law enforcement officer.

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You can't refuse to allow your snowmobile to be inspected for suspected sound violations or other suspected equipment violations.

You cannot operate, offer for sale or sell a snowmobile that is wider than 48 inches if it was manufactured after May 7, 1994.

You can't operate a snowmobile off of the designated trail; if you do you are trespassing.

- Snowmobilers must stay on the right side of the trail and proceed with caution when approaching oncoming snowmobiles.
- Tampering with an odometer or hour meter is prohibited. Contact DNR law enforcement at 608-266-2142 for directions on how to replace or service a meter legally.

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### **Equipment—Lights, Reflectors and Exhaust Requirements**

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Your snowmobile must have a white headlamp and a tail lamp that is turned on during the hours of darkness or when you are riding on any roadway or road ditch (right-of-way). It is recommended that your lights stay on whenever you ride.

Designer headlamp covers (red, yellow, blue, etc., lens covers) are not legal to use when you are riding within a highway right-of-way, or during the hours of darkness. Under most circumstances, you cannot use colored headlamp covers.

Your snowmobile must be equipped with at least one brake, operated either by hand or by foot.

- Track studs or cleats are legal to use in Wisconsin without paying additional fee-pass requirements. However, use common sense and recognize when studs are used improperly or aggressively they can damage property and can tarnish your image, which makes it difficult to maintain existing trails.

Your snowmobile must be equipped with side marker reflectors if manufactured after July 1, 1972.

Your snowmobile must have a muffler in good working order, which blends the exhaust noise into the overall engine noise. The only exception to the sound laws are when you operate your snowmobile during a Sanctioned Race or you are a dealer/manufacturer testing the snowmobile on your own land.

- Noise limit—for every snowmobile manufactured on or after July 2, 1975, the noise level standard for exhaust and engine noise shall be 88 decibels as measured in accordance with the procedures established for the measurement of exhaust sound levels of stationary snowmobiles in the January 2004 Society of Automotive Engineers Standards J2567.

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- To help stay compliant, do not alter your exhaust to be louder than the original exhaust system. If your snowmobile sounds louder than normal, you may be in violation. Maintain your snowmobile and seek the advice of a service technician if you are in doubt.

You cannot modify your snowmobile's exhaust in any manner that will amplify or increase the total noise emission above that emitted by the snowmobile as originally manufactured, regardless of date of manufacture.

- Excessive or unusually loud snowmobiles are illegal and hurt Wisconsin's trail system. Do not increase your exhaust noise or operate with your exhaust system in excess of the sound limits. Wisconsin vigorously enforces the sound limits and penalties can be severe, however the worst thing about a loud snowmobile is that it causes properties to be permanently closed to snowmobile riding.

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### **Accidents and Crashes**

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If you are involved in a crash, the first thing to do is ensure you are okay and not going to be involved in another crash from a following snowmobile. You must provide help to anyone else who was involved unless you are physically incapable of doing so. Give your name and address to the other snowmobiler(s) or party whose property was damaged.

Any crash that results in an injury requiring treatment by a physician or a fatal incident must be reported as soon as possible to a Conservation Warden or other law enforcement officer. You must file a written report of the incident within 10 days to the DNR. Contact your nearest DNR Service Center or sheriff's office for the accident form.

Accident forms can be downloaded from the DNR website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/enforcement/safety/snoacc.html>

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### **Sanctioned Races**

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All sponsored radar runs are sanctioned races. Snowmobiles are exempt from registration if the snowmobile is used exclusively for racing on a racing facility. Check with local authorities for additional permit requirements.

Any county, town, city or village may block off the highways under its jurisdiction for the purpose of allowing special snowmobile events. No state trunk highway or connecting highway, or part of a highway can be blocked off by any county, town, city or village for any snowmobile race or derby. When you are operating on a privately owned raceway facility you do not have to slow to 10-mph when you are within 100-feet of a person who is not in or on a snowmobile or vehicle.

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When you are operating a snowmobile in a sanctioned race or derby on public land you do not have to slow to 10-mph when you are within 100-feet of a person who is not in or on a snowmobile or vehicle if the race or derby sponsor marks the track to warn spectators from entering the track area.

When you are operating a snowmobile in a sanctioned race or derby on frozen surface waters, you must slow to 10-mph when you are within 100-feet of a person who is not in or on a snowmobile or vehicle. The race or derby sponsor must mark the track to keep spectators 100 feet away from the race or derby. The sponsor conducting the race or derby must notify the local Conservation Warden or law enforcement agency within that jurisdiction prior to the race or derby.

If you are competing in a sanctioned race or derby the snowmobile must be equipped with a device (lanyard) wired into the motor's electrical system that will shut off the motor in case you fall off of the snowmobile. The lanyard must be attached to you during all times and at all locations of operation at the race or derby area, including the pit or warm up area. Typically the lanyard is attached to the wrist.

- During sanctioned races, if you are involved in a crash and seek treatment by a physician, you do not need to file an accident report with the department.

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### **Enforcement**

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Any Conservation Warden, officer of the State Patrol or Inspector, county sheriff or municipal peace officer may enforce snowmobile laws.

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### **Trailer information**

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#### **Title**

If the combined weight of a Wisconsin snowmobile and trailer is over 3,000 pounds, you will need to title the trailer with the Wisconsin DOT. You will also need to equip the trailer with brakes.

#### **Trailer lighting**

You cannot tow a trailer during the hours of darkness unless it displays the lighting equipment as prescribed in Section 347 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

#### **Safety chains**

Safety chains are required on all towed vehicles and trailers. For further information contact the Wisconsin DOT.

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## Liability of Landowners

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Landowners who allow snowmobile trails to cross their property are not required to keep the premises safe for recreational activities, to inspect the property, or to give warning of an unsafe condition: Be mindful of your actions at all times while riding a snowmobile.

Private property owners provide most of the trails you ride on free of charge. Their continued support keeps YOUR trails open.

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## Snowmobile Code of Ethics

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1. I will be a good sportsman. I recognize that people judge all snowmobile owners by my actions. I will use my influence with other snowmobile owners to promote sportsmanlike conduct.
2. I will not litter trails or camping areas. I will not pollute streams or lakes.
3. I will not damage living trees, shrubs, or other natural features.
4. I will respect other people's property and rights.
5. I will lend a helping hand when I see someone in distress.
6. I will make myself and my snowmobile available to assist with search and rescue.
7. I will not interfere with or harass hikers, skiers, snow-shoers, ice fishermen or other winter sportsmen. I will respect their rights to enjoy our recreation facilities.
8. I will know and obey all federal, state and local rules regulating the operation of snowmobiles.
9. I will not harass wildlife. I will avoid areas posted for the protection or feeding of wildlife.
10. I will stay on marked trails or marked roads open to snowmobiles. I will avoid cross-country travel unless specifically authorized.

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## Basic Snowmobile Safety Code

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1. Do not consume alcohol or take drugs prior to or during your snowmobile trip. Doing so increases your chances of being injured or killed.
2. Slow down and don't cut to the inside of the trail corners, it's dangerous and illegal.
3. If you snowmobile at night, don't override your lights.
4. Always use the buddy system. Never ride off alone or unaccompanied.
5. Drowning is one of the causes of many snowmobile fatalities. Whenever possible, avoid the ice.

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6. Wear sensible, protective clothing designed for snowmobiling.
  7. Use a full face size helmet, goggles, or visor to prevent injuries from twigs, stones, ice chips and flying debris.
  8. Avoid wearing long scarves. They may get caught in moving parts of the snowmobile.
  9. Know the terrain you are going to ride. If unfamiliar to you, you need to slow down and be prepared for the unexpected.
  10. Know the weather forecast, especially the ice and snow conditions in the area.
  11. Be sure your snowmobile is in good mechanical condition at the beginning of the winter season and throughout the months of use.
  12. Familiarize yourself with the snowmobile you are driving by reading the owner's manual accompanying the snowmobile.
  13. Do not pursue domestic or wild animals. If you see a violation of this rule, report it to the nearest law enforcement officer.

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### **Local Ordinances—Town, City or County Rules**

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Counties, towns, cities and villages may regulate snowmobile operation on snowmobile trails or routes by creating local laws. Check locally for the specific laws.

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### **Trail Signs and Standards**

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Trail and Route signs are standardized across the nation. Rules have been created by the DNR and the DOT to make the signs uniform and consistent with national standards.

#### **Interference with Trail Signs and Standards**

No person can intentionally remove, damage, deface, move or obstruct any official snowmobile trail sign placed by the state, municipality or authorized individual.

Only authorized individuals can possess an official snowmobile trail sign. Merely possessing an official snowmobile trail sign infers you obtained it illegally.

- Leave all signs in place. Someone's life will depend on it. If you notice a sign is missing or is down, notify your snowmobile club representative or county official immediately.



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## Common Signs

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Below are some of the common signs you might see while snowmobiling.





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## Definitions

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**78 decibels** — Every snowmobile manufactured after July 1, 1975, and offered for sale or sold in this state shall be so constructed as to limit total vehicle noise to not more than 78 decibels of A sound pressure, as measured by Society of Automotive Engineers standards.

**82 decibels** — Every snowmobile manufactured after July 1, 1972, and offered for sale or sold in this state shall be so constructed as to limit total vehicle noise to not more than 82 decibels of A sound pressure at 50 feet, as measured by Society of Automotive Engineers standards.

**Cowling** — The hood portion of the snowmobile, which covers the engine and the drive-belt components. Usually, a windshield is attached to the cowling.

**Dealer** — See snowmobile dealer.

**DNR** — Department of Natural Resources.

**DOT** — Department of Transportation.

**Headlamp** — A major lighting device used to provide general illumination ahead of a vehicle, which must display a white light of sufficient illuminating power to reveal any person, vehicle or substantial object at a distance of 200 feet ahead.

**Highway** — All public ways and thoroughfares and bridges on the same. It includes the entire width between the boundary lines of every way open to the use of the public as a matter of right for the purpose of vehicle traffic. *Generally* - Federal and State Highways are designated by a number. County highways are designated by a letter or letters. Town roads are generally designated by a name.

**Hours of Darkness** — The period of time from 1/2 hour after sunset to 1/2 hour before sunrise and all other times when there is not sufficient natural light to render clearly visible any person or vehicle on a highway at a distance of 500 feet.

**Immediate Family** — Persons who are related as spouses, as siblings or as parent and child.

**Land Under The Management And Control Of The Person's Immediate Family** — Land owned or leased by the person or a member of the person's immediate family and over which the owner or lessee has management and control. This term excludes land owned or leased by an organization of which the person or a member of the person's immediate family is a member.

**Noise limit** — for every snowmobile manufactured on or after July 2, 1975, the noise level standard for exhaust and engine noise shall be 88 decibels as measured in accordance with the procedures established for the measurement of exhaust sound levels of stationary snowmobiles in the January 2004 Society of Automotive Engineers Standards J2567.

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**Operate**—Physical control over the speed or direction of a snowmobile or the physical manipulation or activation of any of the controls of a snowmobile necessary to put it in motion. “Operate” includes the operation of a snowmobile.

**Operator**—A person who operates a snowmobile, who is responsible for the operation of a snowmobile or who is supervising the operation of a snowmobile.

**Private Property**—Land owned or leased by the owner or member of his or her own family (spouses, siblings, or parent and child).

**Purpose of Access from Lodging**—The purpose of traveling the shortest distance that is necessary for a person operating the snowmobile to go between a lodging establishment and the snowmobile route or snowmobile trail that is closest to the lodging establishment.

**Purpose of Residential Access**—The purpose of traveling for the shortest distance that is necessary for a person operating the snowmobile to go between a residence and the snowmobile route or snowmobile trail that is closest to that residence.

**Roadway**—That portion of a highway between the regularly established curb line or that portion, which is improved, designed or ordinarily used for vehicle travel excluding the berm or shoulder.

**Sanctioned Race or Derby**—A competitive snowmobile event sponsored by a county, town, city or village, by a promoter, chamber of commerce, snowmobile club or other similar organization.

**Side Marker Reflectors**—Means reflectors meeting the visibility requirements of Society of Automotive Engineers standards or reflex material standards in compliance with federal specifications.

**Snowmobile**—An engine-driven vehicle that is manufactured solely for snowmobiling that has an endless belt tread and sled-type runners or skis, to be used in contact with snow. A snowmobile does not include a vehicle that is any of the following: A vehicle that has inflatable tires or a vehicle that is driven by a motor of 4 horsepower or less and that is operated in sanctioned races, derbies, competitions or exhibitions or only on private property. A snowmobile cannot be over 48 inches wide if it was manufactured after May 7, 1994.

**Snowmobile Accident**—A collision accident or other casualty involving a snowmobile.

**Snowmobile Dealer** — Any person engaged in the sale of snowmobiles for a profit at wholesale or retail, or person who manufactures, distributes or rents snowmobiles. Snowmobile dealers conducting business in Wisconsin are required to be licensed by DNR and must have a commercial snowmobile certificate.

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**Snowmobile Manufacturer**—Any person engaged in the manufacture of snowmobiles for sale to the public. Snowmobile manufacturers conducting business in Wisconsin are required to be licensed by DNR and must have a commercial snowmobile certificate.

**Snowmobile Route**—A highway or sidewalk designated for use by snowmobile operators by the governmental agency having jurisdiction as authorized under this chapter. Generally a route is a roadway that allows you to get from the trail through town to the next trail.

**Snowmobile Renter**—Any person engaged in the business of renting or leasing of snowmobiles to the public.

**Snowmobile Trail**—A marked corridor on public property or on private lands subject to public easement or lease, designated for use by snowmobile operators by the governmental agency have jurisdiction, but excluding highways except those highways on which the roadway is not normally maintained for other vehicle traffic by the removal of snow. Trails are marked with Orange blazers.

**Street**—Every highway within the corporate limits of a city or village except alleys.

**Tail Lamp**—A device to designate the rear of a vehicle by a warning light which must display a red light plainly visible during darkness from a distance of 500 feet to the rear.

**Town Road/Highway**—Roads constructed and maintained by the towns.

**Validation**—A process during registration that allows you to keep a copy of the snowmobile registration application on the snowmobile showing proof that you paid the required fees. Once your application is validated by DNR or a snowmobile dealer, you may legally operate your snowmobile. The validated registration copy will act as a “temporary registration” until your decals and certificate of registration arrives in the mail.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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Q Can ATVs equipped with tracks and/or skis be registered as a snowmobile?

A No. A tracked system modifies an ATV to the point it cannot be ridden on a trail. They may be used on private property with permission and on frozen waterways.

Q Can I dual register my snowmobile for Wisconsin and my home state?

A Yes. Wisconsin has no restrictions for a non-resident to register their snowmobile in Wisconsin. Check with your home state for any restrictions they may have.

Q Are studs legal for use in Wisconsin?

A Yes. There are no restrictions on use, however irresponsible practices while crossing driveways and on roadways may jeopardize their future use.

Q Is there a special permit that would allow antique or vintage snowmobiles to ride on the public trails for an event?

A No, snowmobile 1966 and older can purchase a Wisconsin Antique snowmobile registration and display those decals. All other machines have to purchase Wisconsin Public Use registration and display those decals. Any snowmobiles used during a race or derby are exempt from registration, however all laws related with setting up and participating in a race or derby, must be followed.

Q Is there an official dates which trails open and close?

A Trail openings and closings are determined at the county level. Landowner easements usually dictate the earliest and latest the trails can open and close. Normally, these easements run from December 1st through March 31st. Each county usually has a "trail hotline" number that provides the most recent status of their trails.

Q I know I can ride the ditch, 10 feet from a county or state highway and completely off the road along town roads. What if the ditch is too steep or narrow to ride on, can I then go on the road for a short distance?

A No, you must abide by these distances at all time except when crossing a bridge, culvert or railroad right-of-way and after yielding to all vehicular traffic first.

Q Can I legally ride the ditch (as described above) when the rest of the trails are closed? Even if there is a marked trail in the ditch?

A Yes, you may ride the ditch at anytime and even if there is a marked trail there.

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Q I have seen snowmobile tracks on the trails prior to the official open date, can I assume that the trails are open for legal riding?

A No. Snowmobile club members or government personnel may have permission to ride the trails to conduct an inspection prior to officially opening the trails. Also, many of the trails run across private property which the landowner can ride on whenever they want. Always check with the local trail hotline or Sheriff's Department.

Q Are there any restrictions on water skipping?

A Yes. Snowmobiles modified in any way to aid in over the water transportation are considered boats and must abide by all boating regulations. This would include the prohibition from operating at faster than slow-no-wake speed with 100 feet of shore. Water skipping events are exempt from these restrictions; however a local Water Exhibition permit is required.

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### **Wisconsin DNR Offices and Registration Validation Stations**

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Website: [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov)

E-mail: [csweb@wi.gov](mailto:csweb@wi.gov)

Telephone: Toll-free 1-888-WDNRINFO (1-888-936-7463) answered seven days a week from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm.

Walk-in service is available at DNR offices throughout Wisconsin. Visit our website or contact the Call Center for the nearest location and hours.

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## Penalties

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The fines for violating the snowmobile laws range from \$125.90 — \$2,000. You could also face up to one year in jail. In addition, the courts may revoke your privilege to operate a snowmobile. The ultimate price for violating the rules is the negative effect on the image of all snowmobilers.

Do the right thing.  
Slow Down.  
Ride Sober.  
Ride for Life.



Need trail information? You can obtain trail maps by contacting your local county official, chamber of commerce, Department of Tourism or you can locate maps through the following web site link [www.travel-wisconsin.com](http://www.travel-wisconsin.com)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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