

# 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!**

**Helmets Save Lives. Wear it Wisconsin!**



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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## **Snowmobile Clubs / Organizations**

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)

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## New Snowmobile Trail Pass Requirements

Beginning with the 2015-16 snow season, all snowmobiles operating on a Wisconsin snowmobile trail or corridor must display a valid snowmobile trail pass along with a valid snowmobile registration.

**Exemptions for displaying a trail pass** — Snowmobiles are exempt from displaying a trail pass if:

- The snowmobile has a valid Wisconsin antique registration.
- The snowmobile is owned by the U.S., another state or political subdivision thereof if the owner's name is displayed on the cowling.
- The snowmobile is present in this state for a period not to exceed 15 days provided it is used exclusively as part of an advertisement being used for the manufacturer of the snowmobile.
- The snowmobile operator is carrying a valid temporary trail use receipt issued with a trail pass order.

**The snowmobile trail pass is:**

- An annual pass valid until June 30 each year.
- Separate from snowmobile registration.
- A 3" X 3" decal required to be permanently affixed to the bottom center portion of the snowmobile windshield. If no windshield is available, the pass may be displayed in a highly visible location that is forward of the operator.
- Not required to operate on private property, on a snowmobile route, or on frozen water if not on a marked corridor.
- Not transferrable.



### **Snowmobile trail pass types, fees and how to order:**

The snowmobile trail pass fee is dependent upon whether the snowmobile for which you are purchasing the trail pass is registered in Wisconsin and whether the owner of that snowmobile is a member of a snowmobile club and the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC). Trail pass fees are non-refundable. At time of purchase, Wisconsin trail pass orders will need to provide the Wisconsin registration number, and nonresident trail pass orders will need to provide the make and model.

- Wisconsin snowmobile trail pass (\$30) – for a snowmobile registered in Wisconsin. Order [online](http://www.GoWild.wi.gov) at [www.GoWild.wi.gov](http://www.GoWild.wi.gov) or at any [DNR sales agent](#).
- Wisconsin snowmobile trail pass for club members (\$10) – for a snowmobile registered in Wisconsin and owned by a person who is both a member of a snowmobile club and a member of AWSC. Ordered only through AWSC via their website or by mail, phone or in person from their DeForest office. Please visit [www.awsc.org](http://www.awsc.org) for more details.
- Nonresident snowmobile trail pass (\$50) – for a snowmobile registered in or in the process of being registered in another state, province or country. Order [online](http://www.GoWild.wi.gov) at [www.GoWild.wi.gov](http://www.GoWild.wi.gov) or at any [DNR sales agent](#).

## 4 • Trail Pass Requirements

- All trail passes will be shipped by U.S. Mail within 2 business days to the address specified. Those who order a trail pass from the DNR online, at a DNR license agent, or from AWSC will receive a temporary trail use receipt that allows for immediate operation until the trail pass is delivered and affixed to the snowmobile's windshield.

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## **Which snowmobile trail pass is right for me?**

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### **MY SNOWMOBILE IS REGISTERED IN WISCONSIN:**

- I AM AN AWSC SNOWMOBILE CLUB MEMBER:
  - ◇ A \$10 discounted annual Wisconsin Trail Pass is available to owners of snowmobiles who currently belong to BOTH a Wisconsin snowmobile club AND the AWSC.
  - ◇ Passes may be ordered through the AWSC website [www.awsc.org](http://www.awsc.org) or their DeForest office. A discounted pass is available for each Wisconsin-registered snowmobile.
  - ◇ Trail passes are delivered by US Mail. A temporary trail use receipt will be issued for the discounted pass.
- I AM NOT AN AWSC SNOWMOBILE CLUB MEMBER:
  - ◇ The annual Wisconsin Trail Pass is \$30 for owners of snowmobiles who are NOT MEMBERS of a snowmobile club affiliated with the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC).
  - ◇ This pass may be ordered online at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword search "snowmobile trail pass", or anywhere DNR licenses are sold.
  - ◇ Online and authorized sales agent orders will supply a temporary trail use receipt to allow for immediate operation of the snowmobile. Carry the receipt with you until your pass is delivered by the U.S. Mail and affixed to your snowmobile's windshield.
- MY SNOWMOBILE IS REGISTERED AS AN ANTIQUE (model year 35 years or older):
  - ◇ Owners of snowmobiles registered as antique are not required to purchase or display snowmobile trail passes.

### **MY SNOWMOBILE IS NOT REGISTERED IN WISCONSIN BUT I HAVE VALID OUT-OF-STATE REGISTRATION:**

A nonresident snowmobile trail pass is \$50 per year. This pass may be purchased online at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword search "snowmobile trail pass", at select DNR license sales agents or any DNR service center. Online orders will supply a temporary trail use receipt to allow for immediate operation of the snowmobile. Carry the receipt with you until your pass is delivered by the U.S. Mail and affixed to your snowmobile's windshield.

Online orders are delivered by U.S. Mail.

**NOTE:** Snowmobile trail pass fees are non-refundable.

The department will not honor refund requests if the snowmobile's owner purchases a full priced snowmobile trail pass and later purchases a club member pass at the discounted rate.

**Snowmobile Dealers** –Wisconsin commercial dealer registration are required to purchase and display a valid Wisconsin snowmobile trail pass.

- Dealers will provide the commercial registration decal number assigned to them at time of purchase. Trail passes are required for each commercial plate being used on public corridors and are not interchangeable between plates.
- Commercial snowmobile certificate holders will affix the annual trail pass on a plate that is removable and temporary, but firmly mounted to the snowmobile.
  - ◇ The plate should have room to accommodate both the trail pass and the commercial registration decal.
  - ◇ There are no dimension or color requirements for the plate.
  - ◇ The plate needs to be legible and displayed in a visible location on the snowmobile.



- Dealers registered in another state are required to purchase and display a nonresident snowmobile trail pass.

**How is snowmobile trail pass revenue used?** *The revenue generated from snowmobile trail pass sales directly benefits snowmobiling in Wisconsin by increasing the snowmobile segregated fund, which is used to pay for maintenance and development of snowmobile trails. The discounted club member pass provides incentive for membership in local snowmobile clubs, whose members provide the majority of the labor and equipment used to maintain the snowmobile trails.*

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## Registration

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*All snowmobiles kept in Wisconsin for more than 15 consecutive days must be registered in Wisconsin.*

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**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. 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 the reservation boundary.
- The snowmobile displays current out of state registration and a valid Wisconsin Nonresident Snowmobile Trail Pass.

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



**Registration types:**

**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 3 years, which begins July 1 and expires June 30 three 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. Private use registrations are valid for the length of ownership of the snowmobile, and do not expire. The proof of registration must be carried with you while riding and must be presented to an enforcement officer when requested. Fee: \$0.

**Antique Registrations**—Snowmobiles 35 years and older may be registered as antique. Antique registrations are valid for 3 years, which begins July 1 and expires June 30 three years later. The proof of registration must be carried with you while riding and must be presented to an enforcement officer when requested. Fee: \$20. Renewal Fee: \$5.

**Commercial Dealer**—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 commercial registration decals. Your commercial registration decal must be affixed to a plate (of your own design) that is clearly displayed and mounted to each snowmobile you lease, rent, offer for sale or otherwise allow to be operated as part of your business. Fee: \$90. You can purchase additional decals from the DNR. Fee: \$30 per decal.

**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 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. Once your out of state registered snowmobile has been in Wisconsin for longer than 15 consecutive days, it **MUST** be registered in Wisconsin.

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## Transfer of Ownership

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**Snowmobiles Already Registered in Wisconsin** – Choose one of the registration options to apply for a 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. Transfer Fee: \$5

**Snowmobiles Not Previously Registered in Wisconsin** – Choose one of the registration options to apply for an original Wisconsin registration prior to operation.

**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 call the DNR Call Center at 1-888-936-7463, e-mail [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.

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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:

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*NOTE: A snowmobile trail pass may also be required; see "New Snowmobile Trail Pass Requirements".*

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**Online**—Registering or renewing online at [GoWild.wi.gov](http://GoWild.wi.gov) is a secure, easy and convenient method to register your recreational vehicle. Online registration allows you to process your snowmobile registration transactions for the machine you currently own, or to register recently purchased machines. 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.

**DNR Sales Agents**—Agents can process snowmobile registration renewals only. DNR sales agents provide a Temporary Operating Receipt that you may use to ride your snowmobile prior to receiving the registration decals in the mail. For a complete list of DNR Sales Agents go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search "sales agents."

**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 9400-210) is available from DNR Service Centers, by calling 1-888-936-7463 or you can download and print a copy at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov). Applicants must wait to receive materials in the mail before they can operate their snowmobile.



**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 temporary operating receipt must be carried with you while operating the snowmobile until your decal and registration certificate arrive in the mail.

**Snowmobiles Purchased from a Private Party or Out-Of-State Dealer**—Choose one of the registration options above to complete the registration.

**Lost or Destroyed Registrations**—Choose one of the registration options above to apply for a replacement certificate card or expiration decal.

## 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 in most areas (see exceptions below). You must carry the certificate while riding and you must display it to a law enforcement officer when requested.

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.

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## Snowmobile Safety Certification

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Snowmobile Safety Certification may be obtained by successfully completing a DNR sponsored snowmobile safety course. Volunteer instructors offer courses throughout the year.

To locate a course near you go to [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search or keyword "Education". Click on "Find" and then select "Search for and Enroll in Upcoming Classes". If you don't see a course offered near you, check back as lists are updated weekly. Don't forget to check nearby, adjacent counties for courses offered in nearby communities.

Online safety certification courses are also available for students age 16 and older. Upon completion, students must print out a receipt confirming their successful completion of the course and carry it with them until they receive their official safety certificate from the DNR.

NOTE: State law only permits students age 16 and older to complete an internet Snowmobile Safety Course.

The two approved internet safety courses for Wisconsin are:

[www.snowmobilecourse.com/usa/wisconsin](http://www.snowmobilecourse.com/usa/wisconsin)

[www.snowmobile-ed.com/wisconsin](http://www.snowmobile-ed.com/wisconsin)

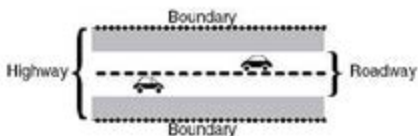
Prior to enrolling in a Safety Class you must obtain a WIDNR Customer Identification (Account) Number. If you purchased a Wisconsin fishing or hunting license in the past, you already have a customer account. Inspect your DNR approvals (hunting license, fishing license, etc.) for your ID Number.

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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## Operation on or Near 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.

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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## Snowmobile 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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## Small Snowmobile Rules

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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.

It is illegal to operate with a detectable amount of restricted controlled substances in your system.

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.

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## Distance, Hours and Speed Restrictions

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

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

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

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## Trespass to Private and Public Property

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It is illegal to operate a snowmobile on a private property without the owner's or lessee's consent. Landowners are not required to post signs on their property.

- The most common violation is cutting corners on trails crossing private property. Always follow the trail markers. Trespassing closes trails, creates hardships for clubs and HURTS EVERYONE.
- It is illegal to operate a snowmobile on forest nursery planting areas or public lands which are posted or reasonably identified as an area of forest plan reproduction.
- It is illegal to operate on a ski area, slide or skating area except at marked locations or after stopping and yielding the right of way.
- It is illegal to operate on or across a cemetery, burial ground, school or church without the consent of the owner.

You may not operate a snowmobile on an operating airport or landing facility without consent.

You may not operate a snowmobile on Native American lands without the consent of the tribal governing body.

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## Other Prohibited Operation and Requirements

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It is illegal to operate your snowmobile in the following manner:

- at speeds that are unreasonable or improper.
- in a careless manner so that it endangers a person or property.

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

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

It is illegal to allow a person to operate a snowmobile if they have not obtained the required safety certificate, 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 may transport an uncased firearm or bow on a snowmobile if it is unloaded. Openly exposed handguns may be transported 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.

It is illegal to refuse inspection of your snowmobile for suspected sound violations or other 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.

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 ammeter legally.

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## Equipment—Lights, Reflectors, Brakes & Exhaust

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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.

Headlamp covers (red, yellow, blue, etc.,) are not legal to use when you are riding on or along a road or during the hours of darkness. Under most circumstances, you cannot use colored headlamp covers.

Auxiliary lighting is legal as long as it doesn't interfere with the legal headlamp and/or tail lamp requirements. Flashing red and/or blue lights are designated for law enforcement use only.

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

Track studs are legal to use without additional fees or requirements.

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 is 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.

### **Pipe Down! Loud Pipes Close Trails!**

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 a fatality or an injury requiring treatment by a physician 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 completed and e-mailed from the DNR website at: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/snowmobile/documents/4100-174.pdf>

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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, 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 10mph and within 100 feet of a person who is not in or on a snowmobile or vehicle.

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 at all times and at all locations of operation including the pit or warm up area, at the race or derby 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 an ethical rider. I recognize that people judge all snowmobile operators by my actions. I will use my influence with others to promote ethical conduct.
  2. I will not litter or pollute streams or lakes.
  3. I will not damage living trees, shrubs, or other natural features.
  4. I will ride within my limits and within the limits of the least experienced rider in my group.
  5. I will lend a helping hand when I see someone in distress.
  6. I will make myself and my snowmobile available for search and rescue.
  7. I will not interfere with or harass hikers, skiers, bicyclists, ice fishermen or other winter sports enthusiasts. I will respect their rights to legally enjoy Wisconsin's great outdoors.
  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 where wildlife is known to gather and slow or stop my snowmobile when I see wildlife nearby.
  10. I will stay on marked trails or marked roads open to snowmobiles.
  11. I will avoid cross-country travel unless specifically authorized.
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## Basic Snowmobile Safety Code

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- Don't consume alcohol/drugs prior to or during your ride. Promote "Zero Alcohol" instead, which is a smart choice to not consume any alcohol until done riding and safely back at the hotel, house or cabin.
- Slow down and don't cut to the inside of the trail corners, it's dangerous and illegal.
- If snowmobiling at night, don't override your headlights.
- Always use the buddy system. Never ride alone.
- Use a high degree of caution when riding on the ice. Check ice conditions with local law enforcement, bait shops and/or snowmobile clubs before you go.
- Wear sensible, protective clothing designed for snowmobiling. Dress in layers and pack extra cloths on longer rides.
- Use a full face helmet with goggles or a shield.
- Always carry a map or mapping device unless familiar with the area.
- No matter what, be prepared for the unexpected. Carry a cell phone, first aid kit and snacks even on short trips.
- Check the weather forecast and trail conditions before you ride.
- Be sure your snowmobile is always in good running condition and full of gas and oil.
- Familiarize yourself with the snowmobile you are driving by reading the owner's manual accompanying the snowmobile.



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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 enacting local ordinances. 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. You must obey all regulatory signs such as stop signs, yield signs and speed limit signs.

***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

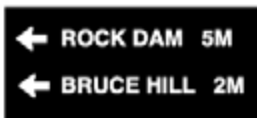
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## Common Signs

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## Definitions

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- 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.
- 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.

**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 having 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.

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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. Not all trails are open to ATVs.
- 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.** Yes. Snowmobiles 35 years and older may be registered as an antique. This registration is good for three years. Fee – \$20. Renewal Fee – \$5. Owners of snowmobiles registered as antiques are not required to display a trail pass while operating on a public snowmobile corridor. To legally operate the antique snowmobile the registration decals must be prominently displayed on both sides of the cowling.
- Q.** Are there official dates on which trails open and close?
- A.** Trail openings and closings are determined at the county level. Land owner 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, can I then go on the road for a short distance?
- A.** No, you must abide by these distances at all times 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 any time and even if there is a marked trail there.
- 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 within 100 feet of shore. Water skipping events are exempt from these restrictions; however a local Water Exhibition permit is required. Local ordinances may exist so check with local authorities.

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## Wisconsin DNR Offices and Registration Agents

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

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

DNR Call Center: 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 \$137.50 — \$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.

Need trail information? You can obtain trail maps by contacting the local snowmobile club, chamber of commerce, Depart. Of Tourism or going to: [www.travel-wisconsin.com](http://www.travel-wisconsin.com)

**Report Natural Resource Violations**

**CALL or TEXT:**

**1-800-TIP-WDNR**

**(1-800-847-9367)**

**Toll Free \* Statewide \* 24-Hour \* Confidential  
(This is NOT an information number)**



**Slow Down  
Ride Sober  
Ride for Life**

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