



Illinois Department of **Natural Resources**

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IDNR Reminds Snowmobile Operators to be Cautious this Winter

Pre-trip planning essential in safe and enjoyable rides

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is reminding snowmobile operators and riders to take extra caution this year as the snow begins to fall in Illinois. Every year throughout the state, people are seriously injured or lose their lives on snowmobiles. Many of these accidents could have been prevented had proper precautions been taken and common sense been used.

Last season in Illinois, 37 reported snowmobile accidents resulted in 1 fatality.

“Snowmobiling, if done with safety and precaution in mind, can be fun and enjoyable but when proper precautions aren’t taken people can find themselves in bad situations,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller. “The IDNR encourages operators to take a snowmobile safety course, always know the terrain in advance of your ride and never consume alcohol before or during your trip.”

In most instances, being alert, knowing the trail, and traveling at a reasonable rate of speed for trail conditions can prevent most accidents. In North America, more than 50 percent of snowmobile fatalities involve intoxicated operators.

While IDNR encourages everyone to take a snowmobile safety class before their first ride of the season, state law requires that persons at least 12 years of age and less than 16 years must have in possession a valid Snowmobile Safety Education Certificate of Competency issued by IDNR in order to operate a snowmobile alone. For snowmobile safety information or a list of upcoming snowmobile classes, see www.dnr.state.il.us/safety/snowmobile.htm.

Current snowmobile safety education courses require students attend an eight-hour class where certified instructors teach basic safety principles, maintenance, operation, winter survival, regulations and a proper attitude of respect for the student's fellow person and the environment.

Basic safety tips for safe snowmobiling:

- Know your equipment and make sure that equipment is in proper working order.
- Wear sensible, protective clothing designed for snowmobiling like a full-size helmet, goggles, or face shield to prevent injuries from twigs, stones, ice chips, and flying debris.
- Avoid wearing long scarves. They may get caught in moving parts of the snowmobile.
- Know the terrain you are going to ride. If unfamiliar to you, ask someone who has traveled over it before. Be aware of trails or portions of trails that may be closed.
- Drowning is one cause of snowmobile fatalities. When not familiar with the thickness of the ice or water currents, avoid these areas.
- Know the weather forecast and especially the ice and snow conditions in the area.
- Always use the buddy system. Never ride alone or unaccompanied.
- Travel at a reasonable rate of speed for your visibility conditions.

Snowmobile accidents/fatalities by year

<u>Year</u>	<u>Reported Accidents</u>	<u>Fatalities</u>
2007-2008	66 accidents reported	7 fatalities
2008-2009	39 accidents reported	3 fatalities

*Reminder to riders and hikers: A minimum of 4 inches of snow cover must be present for snowmobile use on state-managed property. Please call ahead to site offices to get the latest snow conditions and trail closures at individual sites. Ignoring these closures can result in a minimum \$75 fine and possible arrest. For a list of site offices please visit the IDNR website at <http://dnr.state.il.us/lands/landmgt/parks/>