

Northern Michigan

SNOWMOBILING

GUIDE

2017

Riding
Safely

plus...

Snowmobile Rules
& Regulations

Quik-Reference
Trail Maps

How to Buy a
Used Snowmobile

& More!



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Michigan Snowmobile Regulations

LEGAL DEFINITION OF A SNOWMOBILE:

“Snowmobile” means any motor-driven vehicle designed for travel primarily on snow or ice of a type that utilizes sled-type runners or skis, an endless belt tread, or any combination of these or other similar means of contact with the surface upon which it is operated, but is not a vehicle that must be registered under the Michigan vehicle code, 1949 PA 300, MCL 257.1 to 257.923.

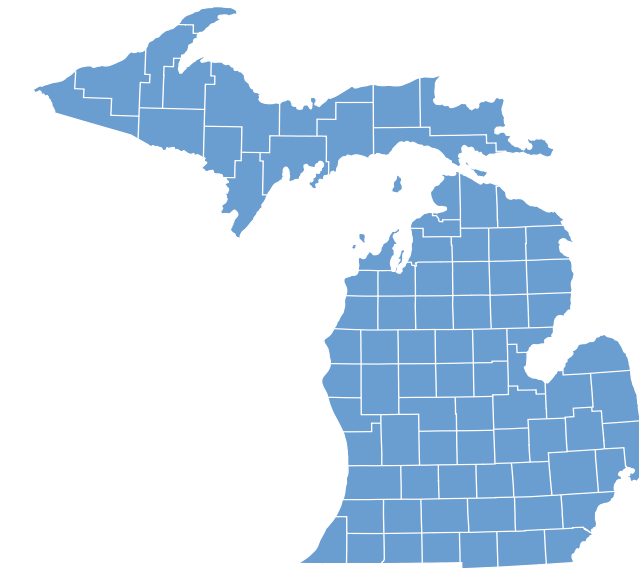
A SNOWMOBILE MAY OPERATE ON A PUBLIC HIGHWAY

Under the Following Conditions:

A snowmobile may be operated on the right-of-way of a public highway (except a limited-access highway) if it is operated at the extreme right of the open portion of the right-of-way and with the flow of traffic on the highway. Snowmobiles operated on a road right-of-way must travel in single file and shall not be operated abreast except when overtaking or passing another snowmobile.

A snowmobile may be operated on the roadway or shoulder when necessary to cross a bridge or culvert if the snowmobile is brought to a complete stop before entering onto the roadway or shoulder and the operator yields the right-of-way to any approaching motor vehicle on the highway.

A snowmobile may be operated across a public highway, other than a limited access highway, at right angles to the highway for the purpose of getting from one area to another when the operation can be done safely



and another vehicle is not crossing the highway at the same time in the immediate area. An operator must bring his/her snowmobile to a complete stop before proceeding across the public highway and must yield the right-of-way to all oncoming traffic.

Snowmobiles may be operated on a highway in a county road system, which is not normally snowplowed for vehicular traffic; and on the right-of-way or shoulder when no right-of-way exists on a snowplowed highway in a county road system, outside the corporate limits of a city or village, which is designated and marked for snowmobile use by the county road commission having jurisdiction.

A PERSON SHALL NOT OPERATE A SNOWMOBILE:

While under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

At a rate of speed greater than is reasonable for existing conditions.

In a forest nursery, plant-

ing area or public lands posted or reasonably identifiable as an area or forest reproduction when growing stock may be damaged or any designated wild, wilderness or natural area in the state.

On the frozen surface of public waters within 100 feet of a person, including a skater, not in or upon a snowmobile or within 100 feet of a fishing shanty or shelter except at the minimum speed required to maintain forward movement of the snowmobile, or on an area that has been cleared for ice skating, unless the area is necessary for gaining access to the public water.

Within 100 feet of a dwelling between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. at a speed greater than the minimum required to maintain forward movement of the snowmobile.

Upon the land of another without consent of the owner or their agent, as required by the recreational trespass act.

In an area open to public hunting during the November 15-30 firearm deer season

from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

While transporting a bow unless it is unstrung or encased, or a firearm unless it is unloaded and securely encased.

? On or across a cemetery or burial ground, airport, railroad or a railroad right-of-way, or within 100 feet of a sledding, skiing or skating area.

To chase, pursue, worry or kill any wild bird or animal.

In a public or private parking lot in a careless or negligent manner.

ACCIDENT REPORTING

The law requires that the operator of a snowmobile involved in an accident **reCONTINUED FROM PG. 4**

sulting in injury to, or death of, any person, or property damage in an estimated amount of \$100 or more, must immediately notify a law enforcement agency within the county in which the accident occurred.

DRIVER LICENSE

Suspended Driver License

You may not operate a snowmobile if your license to operate an automobile has been suspended or revoked by Michigan or your home state.

Points Assessed to Your Driver Record

A person convicted of manslaughter, negligent homicide or a felony resulting from snowmobile operation shall have six points assessed against his/her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

Drunk Driving: Learn the Facts

By **Tim H.**

Here are some interesting drunk driving facts that aren't commonly discussed but important to those who may be potentially facing a DUI or drunk driving related offense:

- Drunk driving and DUI laws vary from state to state as do the potential punishments.

- Drunk driving offenses are considered DUI criminal offenses in every state across the nation.

- Repeat DUI offenses are considered from other states should you re-offend in a different state.

- Almost every state in the U.S. shares DUI information with the other states when you attempt to transfer licenses.

- Your employer will most likely find out about your DUI or criminal drunk driving offense.

- Your auto insurance is certainly affected by a drunk driving offense by being required to carry what's known as a SR22 insurance policy. The SR22 is a 'high risk' type of auto insurance policy that the state DMV requires in order to force the auto insurance company to notify them (the DMV) should the auto insurance company cease to provide coverage for you for any reason. The policy is named after the form that the DMV requires; form SR22.

- Even after a 1st offense DUI you will be re-

quired to complete an alcohol abuse program regardless of your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) or the circumstances of your arrest/conviction.

Overall DUI and/or drunk driving related offenses are serious offenses and you should seek out the help and assistance of a criminal defense lawyer to protect your rights and best interests. The lawyer you select should focus their practice of law exclusively on DUI defense if you want the best possible representation.

Michigan's tough stand against drinking and driving includes snowmobiles and ORVs in an effort to reduce the risk of injury, death, or damage to personal property. Any violations and points you receive for drinking while operating a snowmobile or ORV are placed on your driving record. Points added to your driving record may result in your driver's license being suspended or revoked, preventing you from driving any motor vehicle in Michigan. Fines and penalties increase with additional convictions.

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How to Buy a Used Snowmobile

By Timothy Harrison

Buying a used snowmobile can be a pleasant experience, but there are a few things to keep in mind when making the decision. Don't stop at the first snowmobile that you see and purchase it. It pays off to spend half an hour studying the market and getting a feel for the prices and brands. If you are an informed buyer, your chances of getting stiffed by a seller are far lower. Another great idea is to bring a friend along. If your friend knows a thing or two about snowmobiles, that's even better. Two minds are always better than one, and your friend might play the role of the objective voice, if you get over enthusiastic about a certain offer.

When visiting a snowmobile seller ask him or her to leave the machine

cold - not to start it up and allow it to get heated. This will ensure a rigorous testing of the snowmobile's starting capacity. Warmed up engines will start right away, but cold ones, especially if they have certain malfunctions, will give you a hard time when starting from cold. It also helps if the owner lets you test the snowmobile. In this case you should have your own gear and not borrow it from the owner.

You might think that buying from individual owners is risky - you are right, but dealerships are not far from this truth as well. Some snowmobile dealerships will buy the sleds as trade-ins and polish them up to increase their value. However, a little "make up" does not justify some of the huge price increases. You should find a competent mechanic, if possi-

ble, who will have a look the snowmobile before you purchase it and find any major flaws. Since a work hour on a sled is around \$40 - \$50, you will want to get the snowmobile that has the lowest chances of needing repairs.

Ask the seller if the sled has any accessories, such as a toolkit or instructions manual. Many used snowmobiles do not have them and this should be a good reason for you to negotiate the price even further. Some owners add accessories to their snowmobiles - while those might have been useful for them, they could be of no real value to you. In general, the extra accessories also inflate the snowmobile price. If you just want the basics and are not a huge acces-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



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Adjacent to the Rails to Trails – a great building ideal for many uses with original hardwood floors, indoor pool, metal roof and 6 entrances. Formally a rehabilitation center. Great exposure with high visibility & traffic. Land contract terms available for qualified buyer. MLS 287138 **\$199,900**



Waterfront log sided condominium on Duncan Bay Marina & Yacht Club w/a 60' deep water dock. Private setting & nicely tree. Knotty maple cabinets, granite counters, fireplace & sprawling deck. Main level master. MLS 298242. **\$389,000**

GREAT BUILDING SITES

- 4922 Michakewa Trail 100' on Long Lake
 MLS 291740**\$136,500**
- 1281 Sunset Trail 120' on Mullett Lake
 MLS 303435**\$269,000**
- 5158 Michakewa Trail 115' on Long Lake
 MLS 301057**\$79,900**
- #12 Stillwaters Lane Black River Access lot
 MLS 303387**\$15,000**
- 4804 Reflections Drive 137' on the Cheboygan River
 MLS 295775**\$41,000**
- 5016 Michakewa Trail 135' on Long Lake
 MLS 301057**\$79,900**
- #17 Stillwates Lane Black River Access lot
 MLS 303385**\$29,500**



250' of prime Douglas Lake frontage! Charming main cottage with massive timbers, tongue & groove pine and a cozy 3 bedroom guest cottage! Clean, sandy lake bottom ideal for children of all ages! Great storage in the 4 car garage. Home Warranty protected. MLS 304664. **\$525,000**

Restaurants Just off the Trail

By **Amanda Monthei**

Montmorency County:

El Bo Inn

Located right between Onaway and Atlanta, the El Bo Inn is a necessary pitstop if you're in the area. With a full lunch and dinner menu, the self-proclaimed 'best pizza around,' and easy access to Pigeon River Country, the El Bo has been a go-to for locals since the 1930s.

The El Bo also hand batters their own chicken tenders, cheese sticks, mushrooms, and onion rings, and serves some of Pigeon River Country's best burgers. With a convenience store and gas station attached, the location is even more convenient for riders traveling long distances on the trails near the El-Bo.

Cheboygan County:

Thirsty Sturgeon

Located on the site of the former Meadow's Bar, the Thirsty Sturgeon has been redefining the meaning of bar food for Wolverine, Indian River and surrounding towns. "A hidden riverside gem" in the summer — according to multiple online reviewers — the Thirsty Sturgeon also delivers as a trailside gem in the winter, with the North Central State Trail just out its backdoor. It's not uncommon for people to travel from Petoskey and beyond for the borderline legendary Thirsty Sturgeon calzones, pulled pork pizzas, nachos, Bloody Mary's and burgers, but it's hard to find something you won't like on their full lunch and dinner

menu. Located just a few miles north of Wolverine and about six miles south of Indian River, the restaurant sits just west of the snowmobile trail and east of Old 27 South.

Otsego County:

Lakes of the North — Settings Restaurant

With two large dining areas and a convenient location off the trail between Waters and Mancelona, Settings Restaurant has become somewhat of a 'destination' for local and visiting snowmobilers alike. The restaurant caters to golfers at Lakes of the North in the summer, and keeps the kitchen open in the winter to provide sledders with hot food and cold beverages. Its hours are largely dependent on the snow conditions, as they expect to extend hours later this month as the trails start filling in.

Mama Leones Restaurant



Right on the trail that runs on the south end of Gaylord, Mama Leone's Italian Restaurant has plenty of parking for trucks and snowmobile trailers. This is a popular stop for snowmobilers for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Frank and Yolanda (Mama) Mazella moved from Italy and opened their family restaurant almost 50 years ago. Featuring authentic Italian recipes this is a unique place everyone

enjoys. Look closely through this Snowmobile Guide and find a coupon for a 14 inch one item pizza for just \$6.00. Located on Old 27 South just north of I-75 exit 279.

Antrim County:

Hideaway Bar at Starvation Lake

The owners of Hideaway Bar at Starvation Lake near Mancelona have figured out what weary snowmobilers really want: a half-pound burger stacked high with a fried egg, ham, lettuce, tomato and the fixings, of course.

That explains why the so-called Junkyard Burger has been such a hit with not only snowmobilers, but any visitors looking for a hefty lunch to fill up on. But if food with the word 'junkyard' in its name isn't your thing, their other menu options like reubens, regular burgers and pizza, will certainly keep you satisfied.

The bar caters to everyone, but because the Blue Bear trailhead is nearby, the Hideaway has become a haven for trail-weary riders looking for a half-pound Junkyard burger and a beer.

"The trailhead is across from our parking lot so we're very, very busy in the winter," Amanda Perrin, a waitress at the Hideaway, said. "We just try to take care of everyone — we usually try get everyone a little more for their buck when they come here. It's a good place to come and the trails are always great out here. We look forward to having (snowmobilers) every year."

WHERE/WHEN

El-Bo:

HOURS: 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 12 p.m. to 2 a.m. Friday and Saturday
ADDRESS: 24300 Michigan 33, Atlanta, MI 49709
Nearby Groomed Trails: Trail #9

Thirsty Sturgeon:

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday
ADDRESS: 11900 Scott Road, Wolverine, Michigan
Nearby Groomed Trails: Trail #720 and the North Central State Trail

Settings Restaurant:

HOURS: 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.*, Thursday and Friday; 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.*, Saturday and Sunday. Closing time may change as business warrants.
ADDRESS: 8151 Pineview Drive, Mancelona, MI 49659
Nearby Groomed Trails: Trail #4

Mama Leones

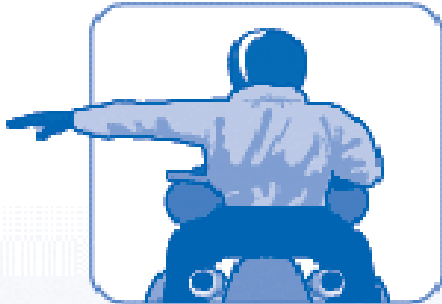
HOURS: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. 7 days a week.
ADDRESS: 2583 South Otsego Avenue, Gaylord, MI 49735
At the Head of the North Branch Trail

Hideaway Bar:

HOURS: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday; 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Saturday and Sunday
ADDRESS: 11224 Starvation Lake Road Northeast, Mancelona, MI 49659
Nearby Groomed Trails: Trail #76 and Trail #679; Blue Bear Snowmobile Trails

Snowmobiles Hand Signals

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Left Turn



Stop



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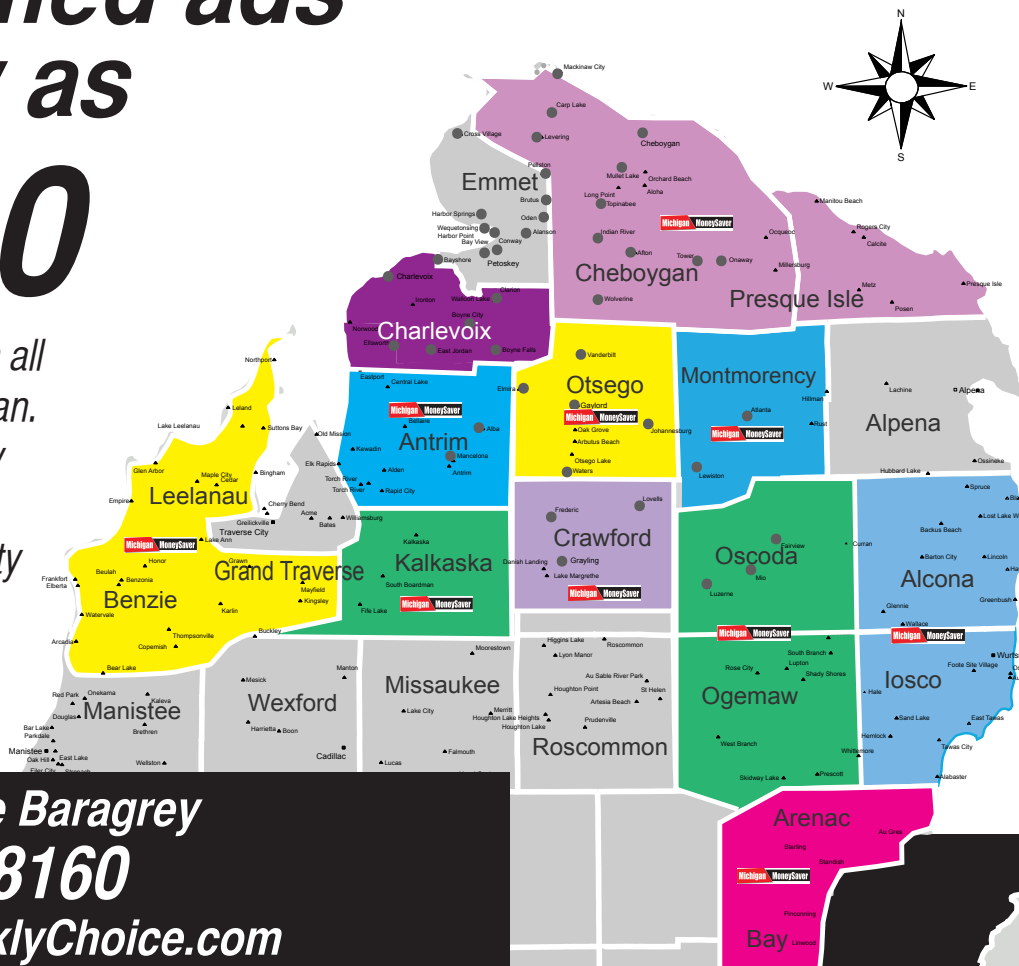
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Being Prepared for an Emergency

By **Amanda Monthei**

A day spent on the trails can be unpredictable, particularly when navigating trails and land that isn't familiar.

However, with some basic knowledge of emergency preparedness, navigation and weather-appropriate gear, getting lost or getting into any other predicament on the trail doesn't necessarily have to ruin your day or put you in danger.

"You need (to prepare and plan ahead) enough to get yourself back to your truck or back to a place where you can get help," said Mike Vizina, a snowmobiler who provides trail tours in and around Indian River. "So I carry a first aid kit of course, and in a lot of cases where we're doing cross country rides, I'll bring extra oil and gas."

While Vizina's advice is simply to plan ahead before any big outings, being prepared in all aspects of your gear, equipment and emergency preparedness is the best way to combat the unpredictable elements of a day of riding. To put it simply, always be proactive about staying safe, dry,



PHOTO 123RF.COM

Flashlights and cell phones may be obvious tools for most snowmobilers, but it's certainly worth the reminder.

warm and prepared.

"If you break down while snowmobiling, it's so important to have waterproof gear so you stay dry," Renee Connors, who owns Indian River Sports Center with her husband Travis and is also an avid snowmobiler.

"The dryer you are the warmer you are. Back in the day a lot of people wore Carhartt's snowmobiling. They're rugged and warm, but certainly not waterproof. I would just say get the right gear, which is waterproof and Goretex gear."

In addition to appropriate gear, which can be found at most area power sports and snowmobiling-specific shops, it's also a good idea to keep the basics where they can be easily accessed.

"Flashlights are a huge

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



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BLAZING *your own* **TRAILS**

- 1** Research different areas to practice off-trail snowmobiling legally. After the year 2000, many national and state agencies--especially national parks--began cracking down on illegal snowmobiling. Make sure all areas you look at allow for off-the-beaten-path trips.
- 2** Prepare your gear beforehand. At minimum, a off-trail snowmobiler will need: long underwear, base layer, snowmobile snowsuit, helmet, snowmobile mittens, snowmobiling boots, an emergency kit (which will have a beacon for rescue, tools for snowmobile repair, water and an emergency blanket), food for two days, water for three days, a GPS unit and a guide book for the area.
- 3** Check terminology to avoid snowmobiling in places that are too thick, technical or dangerous.



Northern Michigan is a great place to enjoy the sport of snowmobiling. While many snowmobilers use groomed trails in the woods and near ski resorts, many thrill seekers look for off-trail access that offers fresh snow and less traffic. Off-trail snowmobiling can be very enjoyable and exciting, but can be a bit dangerous. Before heading out, you must be prepared.

Here are a few tips before you go off the beaten path.

Check the weather patterns and determine the type of terrain you'd like to ride. Some places boast heavy snowfall in the winters and attract powder enthusiasts. Other areas, like in northern Canada, have heavy forests that challenge technical riders.

4 Apply for a permit to ride off-trail. This may not be needed, depending on the area, but it's best to check with either the ranger controlling the area or your local department of natural resources office.

5 Learn different techniques for off-trail riding. As opposed to trail riding, off-trail riding involves using your problem-solving skills to pull yourself out of ditches or deep snow.

Emergency

continued from page 11

thing for emergencies, and it's good to have your cell phone on," Connors said.

Flashlights and cell phones may be obvious tools for most snowmobilers, but it's certainly worth the reminder. Beyond the basics, however, it's also important to keep a stocked first-aid kit on hand, as well as food and water — even if you'll only be out for a few hours.

If your sled breaks down, it's also beneficial to have at least some knowledge of what could be causing the problem. However, all the knowledge in the world won't help if you don't have the right tools on hand. Spark plugs and extra belts are easy bring-alongs that

are immensely helpful in a breakdown. Also nice to have on board? A tow strap, just in case.

"When you bring the proper equipment like the proper tow strap, you don't damage your equipment any further so that's nice to have that," Vizina said. "In the long term, you just need good equipment because you'll have less breakdowns that way. But especially if you're on a long trip, you have to have an idea of where you're going to tow your machine if something does happen."

Knowing where you're at and how close you are to gas, food and roadways is critically important in the event of a breakdown. Vizina recommends the Polaris Snow Trails app, which assists in trail navigation by allowing riders to plan, track and share their rides,

while also helping them find services like gas, lodging and food establishments in their area.

"It's a free app, and it shows your location, so if you break down you can just simply hit the app and it will tell you the nearest facility for someone to come get you and your sled for a rescue," Vizina said.

Vizina added that Northern Michigan in particular is an inherently navigation-friendly region, as nearly all maintained trails have coordinates every couple miles to remind riders where they are if they get a little turned around.

"Every once in a while when you're riding, it's nice to be able to see those coordinates, and it's nice to know that if something happens and you just go a little ways up the trail, you'll have an idea of

where you're at," he said. "So if you have a cell phone and there's an injury, it's very easy for (someone) to respond to you. That's really nice to have in our area."

And when you're not worried about navigation, as Vizina said, you're able to enjoy the trails more.

"In some states, they don't have the trails marked as well as we do in our area," he said. "It just makes it safer and more fun to ride when you're not worried or concerned where you're going."





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Avoiding Snowmobile Crashes

Safety Tips and Avoiding Injuries

By John Maxim

There are approximately 13,000 reported injuries due to snowmobile accidents in the United States each year. Additionally, there are over 100 deaths due to snowmobile crashes each year. Some deaths are the result of the operator being pinned under the vehicle, and over two-fifths of reported deaths are the result of collisions with trees, other vehicles, bridges, and wires. There are also deaths reported that are

caused by the vehicle entering water or falling through ice. Here are some tips that will help ensure your safety while operating a snowmobile:

Never ride a snowmobile alone or across unfamiliar territory. Having a partner will provide an extra measure of safety in the event of a breakdown or accident.

Ride only on established trails and clearly marked areas. Avoid water and frozen lakes. It is impossible to judge the thickness or depth of ice.

Watch the trail in front of you very closely. There could be hidden rocks, barbed wire, or other obstacles in your path. You should avoid operating a snowmobile in bad weather. Check for warnings regarding snowstorms and rain before starting.

Always slow down at the

top of a hill or snow bank. There could be an unexpected hazard on the other side. Also, do not attempt to jump or hurdle snow banks. You will only have control of your snowmobile when the skis are firmly on the ground.

Take the time to learn the snowmobile laws and regulations for the area you are in. Each state has its own requirements and rules in regard to snowmobiles. Use common sense when approaching roads or railroad tracks. Make sure you signal each turn you make and watch for other vehicles. Control your speed according to the conditions in which you are riding.

Use extra caution if you are operating a snowmobile at night. Unseen obstacles can be potentially fatal. Drive only as fast as your headlights will allow you to see safely. Never attempt to navigate new trails at night.

Do not operate a snowmobile while drinking. Numerous accidents occur each year to due driving a snowmobile after consuming alcohol. Make sure the vehicle you are driving has been properly maintained and is in good operating condition. Snowmobiling can be exciting and very safe if you observe the proper precautions and use common sense while riding.

Buying Used

continued from page 4

sory fan, skip the offers that have a full list of add-ons. Many owners put custom exhausts on their snowmobiles (with a full exhaust system priced at one or two hundred dollars). Suspension upgrades are also quite common, but they can also add a few hundred dollars to the overall sled price.

Just like with cars, some people like to get more performance out of their factory sleds. Try to avoid buying modified sleds, as their risk level is the highest. When modifying cer-

tain factory standards to get more performance, owners reduce the life of the snowmobile. Things such as high compression pistons or porting may sound great and offer you a 10% - 15% boost in power, but they are likely to wear out the engine parts a lot sooner. Making the final decision should be as rational as possible - do not let an emotional response dictate your purchase, as this may lead to hours and hours of headaches and a lot of money wasted on repairs.

About the Author - Timothy Harrison is an outdoor sports enthusiast with much experience buying used snowmobiles.



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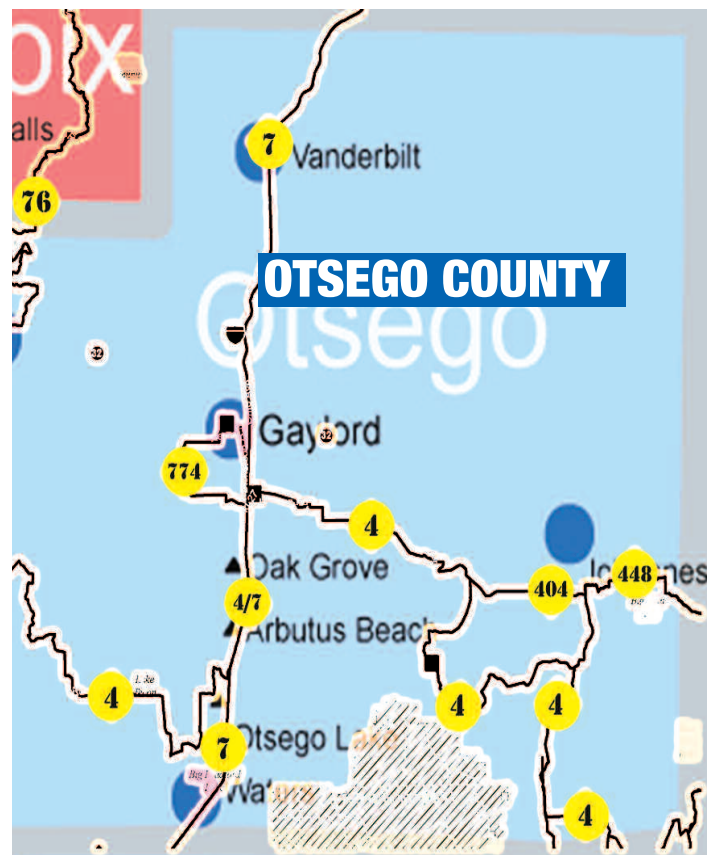
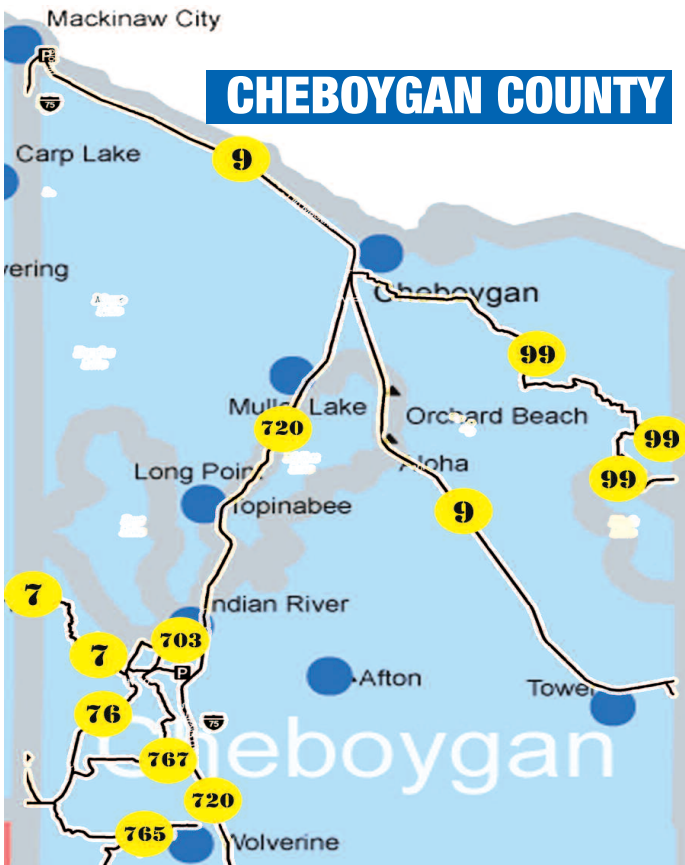
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Riding Safely

By Amanda Monthei

Most riders understand how to operate their snowmobile safely, but a few reminders never hurt anybody.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and www.northernmichigan.com have offered lists of safety precautions to those trying to get on the trails in Michigan this winter. Among those precautions, the most emphasized have been to not operate snowmobiles under the influence of alcohol and to avoid unreasonably high speeds.

According to the DNR website, there were 14 fatal snowmobile crashes during the 2013-2014 season in the state of Michigan. Of those 14, 11 were caused by some fault of the driver, whether by failing to navigate a corner, simply losing control or failing to see and avoid a stationary object or snowbank. One accident was explicitly attributed to high-speed. Another occurred when the rider was riding a rented snowmobile alone and lost control, colliding with a tree.

According to the DNR's 'Safe Riding Hints,' keeping a keen eye out for fences, barbed wire and other stationary objects will help keep riders safe this winter. Additionally, avoiding

frozen bodies of water unless absolutely necessary, and never riding single file across a frozen lake will keep riders from breaking through ice. Being familiar with the landscape where they will be riding — as well as keeping an eye out for depressions in the snow and sharp corners — will assure that riders are capable of navigating trails safely. Finally, always being sure of the weather before leaving — and always wearing appropriate, cold-weather gear — will ensure safe, warm and less risky rides.

While the DNR suggests never operating on a roadway or highway, riders can do so if absolutely necessary. In the event of needing to ride on a roadway, the DNR requires riders to ride single file on the extreme right of the open portion of the right-of-way on public highways, with the flow of traffic. Riders may use the right shoulder of the road if necessary to cross a bridge or overpass — but must first yield the right of way to oncoming motorists. Riders may also cross public highways (not limited passage highways) if they first come to a complete stop, ensuring that no vehicles are oncoming from either direction,

and proceeding with caution at a right angle. County and seasonal roads may be ridden whether they are plowed or not. If plowed, riders must stay on the right shoulder of the roadway.

Additional rules and regulations can be found on the DNR website, www.michigan.gov/dnr.

www.northernmichigan.com offers even more suggestions for riders, including common courtesy to have on the trails. In that regard, they suggest packing everything out that was brought in, emphasizing a 'leave no trace' ethic.

"If you are doing something that leaves more than a snowmobile track, you are doing something wrong. Let's all try to keep Michigan the cleanest and most beautiful state in the union," the website says in regards to leaving no trace and keeping Michigan beautiful.

PHOTO COURTESY OF GAYLORD AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Regulations

continued from page 4

driver record. A person convicted of operating a snowmobile while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, or with an unlawful blood alcohol content shall have six points assessed against his/her driver record. A person who is convicted of operating a snowmobile while visibly impaired due to consumption of alcohol or a controlled substance shall have four points assessed against his/her driver record.

RESTRICTIONS ON YOUTHFUL OPERATION

A person under the age of 12:

May not operate a snowmobile without direct supervision of an adult, except on property owned or controlled by the parent or legal guardian.

May not cross a highway or street.

A person who is at least 12 but less than 17 years of age:

May operate a snowmobile if they have a valid snowmobile safety certificate in their immediate possession or are under direct supervision of a person 21 years of age or older.

May not cross a highway or street without having a valid snowmobile safety certificate in their immediate possession.

REGISTRATION AND TRAIL PERMITS

A snowmobile shall not be operated unless the owner first obtains a certificate of registration, registration decal and a trail permit sticker. The certificate of registration must accompany the snowmobile and be

made available for inspection upon demand by a peace officer.

Before Operating

If owned by a nonresident, before operation in Michigan, a snowmobile must display a valid registration from the operator's home state or province, or be registered in Michigan.

The registration certificate expires on September 30 of the year indicated on the decal.

The color of the decal changes by year of expiration.

Any time a registered snowmobile is sold to another person, the registration also must be transferred. Contact the Secretary of State for transfer information.

State law requires that you affix the registration decals issued to the snowmobile to each side of the forward half of the cowl above the footwell. Beginning July 1, 1999, the registration decals display the registration number assigned to the snowmobile.

A person who desire to operate a snowmobile in this state shall obtain a snowmobile trail permit sticker. The snowmobile trail permit sticker shall be valid for a period of one year, which begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year.

The trail permit sticker shall be permanently affixed to the forward half of the snowmobile directly above or below the headlight.

Snowmobile trail permits are available from snowmobile dealers, DNR offices and retail license agents throughout Michigan.

Snowmobiles are exempt from registration and having a trail permit if they are:

- operated exclusively on lands owned or under the control of the owner.

- used entirely in a safety education program conducted by a certified snowmobile safety instructor.

- operated exclusively in a special event of limited duration which is conducted according to a prearranged schedule under a permit from the governmental unit having proper jurisdiction.

In addition, a snowmobile used solely for transportation on the frozen surface of public waters for ice fishing is exempt from the trail sticker requirement, but must still be registered.

SAFETY EDUCATION

Snowmobile safety education training is recommended for all snowmobile operators and is required for youth ages 12 to 17.

EQUIPMENT

Brakes: Each snowmobile must have a braking system capable of:

Stopping the snowmobile in not more than 40 feet from an initial speed of 20 miles per hour while the snowmobile travels on packed snow carrying an operator who weighs 175 pounds or more.

Locking the snowmobile's traction belt or belts.

Noise: Each snowmobile manufactured after July 1, 1977, shall be equipped with a muffler that does not exceed 78 decibels of sound pressure at 50 feet as meas-

ured by the 1974 SAEJ-192a.

Helmet: All persons operating or riding on a snowmobile must wear a Department of Transportation approved crash helmet.

Lighting: All snowmobiles must display a lighted headlight and taillight at all time during operation. However, the headlight shall not be covered with a lens cap of any color.

SAFE RIDING HINTS

Always keep your machine in top mechanical condition.

Always wear insulated boots and clothing including a helmet and gloves.

Never ride alone. Always go with a friend on another snowmobile.

Avoid, when possible, crossing frozen bodies of water.

Never operate in single file when crossing a frozen body of water.

Always be alert to avoid fences and low-strung wires.

Never operate on a street or highway.

Always look for depressions in the snow.

At an intersection, come to a complete stop, raise off the seat and look for traffic.

Always check the weather before you go.

Leave a travel plan.

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Maintenance and Safety Tips

By **Jim Akans**

Safe snowmobiling is about understanding your abilities, capabilities of your machine, the rules of the trail, and taking steps to make sure your sled is properly maintained.

Randy Danforth, owner T & R Yamaha in East Jordan, notes, "First of all, a lot of the new equipment is much more sophisticated than in the past, so riders should consider having a qualified technician look at their sled to have their pre-season maintenance done."

But what if you really want spend the afternoon (and likely into the evening) in a cold garage, skinning a few knuckles, tackling the job yourself? Randy has a few key points.

He notes, "Getting a snowmobile ready for the season partly depends on how it was put it away for the summer. In particular, fuel isn't what it used to be, so when the machine is "summer-ized" all the fuel should be re-

moved to avoid having the carburetors or fuel injectors gum up. Even using a gas stabilizer is only good for about 30 days. So one of the first things to do is remove any old gas and put in fresh gas."

The next step is to reference the service manual for the actual sled to identify lubrication points and other pre-season maintenance tips. Inspect the slides, wear bars and track for signs of wear, check the lights, and don't forget those hand and thumb warmers.

It's always a good idea to install a new set of spark plugs at the beginning of the season. Another important component is the battery. Have it checked and if it is more than a couple of years old, replace it with a new one.

While confidence in the performance of the machine is important, confidence in operating skills and knowledge of trail rules is essential to a safe and secure riding experience.

The Michigan Snowmobile Safety Course guide offers some sound advice for staying safe on the trails. Among those tips;

Always ride with at least one other rider and when snowmobiling in groups, use the "buddy system" - where pre-assigned "buddies" keep a watch on each other during the ride.

Always ride single file and stay on the right side of the trail.

Stay on posted trails, trespassing on private land is illegal and potentially dangerous.

Plan your trip in advance, and always tell a friend or family member where you are going and when you expect to return.

Beware of fatigue. Try to take a break at least once an hour.

Observe "trail etiquette." In addition to staying on the right side of the trail, learn hand signals, announce your intentions when passing, slow down when being passed, yield the right-of-way to skiers, horses, or hikers on snowshoes, and

never stop in "blind areas" such as hilltops or on curves.

Always wear protective clothing designed for snowmobiling, gloves and helmet (with face shield or goggles).

Take extra precaution at intersections and when crossing roadways. Look both ways!

Of course, never drink and ride. It impairs ability, judgment, reaction time, and carries substantial legal repercussions for the operator.

Riders between 12 and 16 years of age who operate a snowmobile without the direct supervision of an adult must complete a Michigan certified snowmobile course (which is also required for riders in this age category in order to cross a highway or street, even with adult supervision). For a list of those offering snowmobile safety courses in your area, and additional safety information, contact your local snowmobile dealer or visit www.michigan.gov/dnr and search "snowmobile safety."



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