

January 11, 2007

Alberta Snowmobile Association lists safety as a top priority

International Snowmobile Safety Week (January 14-20) reinforces zero tolerance for impaired riding

Edmonton... In Alberta, a snowmobile driver under the influence of alcohol or drugs can be charged with the same impaired driving offences as a car or truck on a highway. Penalties include: fines, loss of driver's licence, a criminal record, and for subsequent convictions, jail sentence. A conviction will affect the driver's privileges to operate any type of motor vehicle, including off-highway vehicles and snowmobiles, on a public roadway or on public land.

Every year, people are injured and killed while snowmobiling, a popular winter recreational activity in Alberta. The major contributing factors in serious snowmobile incidents include excessive speed, not checking the thickness of ice on rivers and lakes, inexperience, inattention, and operating under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

From 1996 to 2005, there were 356 collisions involving 392 motorized snow vehicles. Almost 60 per cent of these collisions resulted in either death or injury. These statistics do not include collisions that occurred on private property.

Be prepared and have the right equipment

- Keep the snowmobile in good working order, and do a pre-ride inspection before every trip.
- Wear a proper-fitting safety certified snowmobile helmet and make sure to have it buckled up at all times. The chinstrap should be snug.
- Wear a wind-resistant and water repellent snowmobile suit or a buoyant snowmobile suit if you travel over frozen water.
- Dress in layers to maintain proper body warmth and prevent hands and feet from freezing.
- Wear a turtleneck sweater or neck warmer instead of a scarf that can catch in moving parts.
- Wear reflective clothing when riding.
- Carry a first-aid kit, an emergency tool kit, an extra key, and a survival kit that includes flares. Carry a cellular phone if you're in an area with service.
- Carry an avalanche beacon, probe and shovel, and make sure everyone knows how to use the beacon and probe in the event of an avalanche in backcountry or mountainous terrain.

Ride safely and obey the law

- Operate at safe and reasonable speeds, driving within your capability. Reckless riders can be charged under the Traffic Safety Act.
- Keep headlights and tail lights on at all times to be more visible.
- Use extra caution while riding at night. Most collisions occur during poor visibility.
- Travel on the right-hand side of the trail and obey trail signs.
- Use the proper hand signals.
- Know the terrain, stay on approved snowmobile trails and never ride on private property without permission.
- Watch for potential hazards and ride at reasonable speed for the terrain.
- Use extreme caution when riding on frozen lakes, rivers and ponds. Check with local authorities to make

- sure the ice is thick enough to ride on.
- Use the buddy system and never ride alone. Inform someone of your route and how long you plan to be gone.
- Do not carry more than one passenger with you. If your snowmobile is designed for one rider only, ride alone.
- Do not pull people on saucers, tubes, tires, sleds or skis behind a snowmobile. Children are prone to injury.
- Exercise extreme caution when crossing a road.
- Make sure your snowmobile is registered and insured if you are riding on property other than your own.

Use care and caution when snowmobiling with children

Operating a snowmobile requires the same maturity required to drive a car. By law, snowmobile drivers must be at least 14 years of age to operate a snowmobile independently.

For more information about snowmobile safety, contact the Alberta Snowmobile Association at (780) 427-2695 or visit www.altasnowmobile.ab.ca. To learn more about traffic safety, please contact the Traffic Safety Initiative at (780) 422-8839 or visit www.saferoads.com.

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