



Snowmobile Safety and Youth: Recommended Guidelines for Media

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A photo can speak a thousand words. Written or verbal safety messages can be negated by one photo that unintentionally gives the wrong message to youth. The following guidelines are suggested for communicating snowmobile safety messages. This list is not inclusive of all safe snowmobile depictions.

Guidelines for "Safe" Communication about Snowmobiles

Do...portray snowmobile operators in proper clothing and protective equipment.

Wearing climate-appropriate clothing and protective equipment is critical to preventing cold-related injuries.

- Display all snowmobile operators wearing proper helmets, goggles, gloves, boots, and dressed for cold weather
- Include helmets in pictures of stationary snowmobiles

Do not...publish photos of snowmobile operators without helmets and protective winter clothing.

Do...promote age-appropriate snowmobile operation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that operating snowmobiles is inappropriate for youth younger than 16 years. In response, some manufacturers have developed smaller and less powerful snowmobiles designed for youth younger than 16 years.

- Show youth on age-appropriate snowmobiles
- Include adult supervision in youth-related snowmobile activities

Do not...publish photos of youth operating adult snowmobiles.

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Do...portray snowmobile operation in appropriate environments.

Studies from North America and Sweden conclude that careless snowmobile operation is a contributing factor to snowmobile-related injury. Other factors include use of alcohol, excessive speed, thin ice, and suboptimal lighting.

- Show snowmobile operators on designated trails
- Show snowmobile operators traveling during daylight hours at moderate speeds
- Promote safe, alcohol-free snowmobile operation
- Do not use the term "accident" when reporting injury incidents. This term suggests the incident was a random event and could not have been prevented.
- Do not publish advertisements that show dangerous riding practices.

Do not...take photos of snowmobile operators jumping or racing. Do not show snowmobile operators in areas prone to avalanches or near water bodies with broken or thinning ice.

Do...cover positive stories of youth and adults involved in snowmobile safety programs.

For additional information on snowmobile safety education programs in your area, contact your local recreation department, snowmobile club or enforcement agency.

- Cover stories of youth and adults involved in safe snowmobile operation
- Recognize youth who complete snowmobile safety education classes
- Advocate for snowmobile safety education classes prior to operation
- Publish snowmobile safety education opportunities

Do not...glorify injured snowmobile operators or place youth in a risky situation for the sake of a story.

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Contributing Sources: United States Department of Agriculture. Farm safety fact sheet . Washington (DC); 1996.
 Children's Safety Network. Snowmobile injury fact sheet. Marshfield (WI); 2000