

## **Adult Responsibilities**

1. Set age and developmentally appropriate expectations for youth.
2. Provide continued supervision and encouragement for safe snowmobile operation.
3. Role model safe behavior and respect for other trail users.
4. Assure that the conditions, environment, and equipment are suitable for a safe riding experience.
5. Provide a certified training class and periodically review safety guidelines. (Snowmobile safety training for youth has not been evaluated to determine its effect on snowmobile-related injury to youths.)
6. Join a snowmobile club that provides family-oriented activities in a safe, alcohol-free environment.

## **For More Information on Youth Snowmobile Safety**

### **Contact:**

- \* Your state snowmobile law enforcement agency.
- \* Your state or local snowmobile club or association.

## **Snowmobile Safety and Youth: What Adults Need to Know**

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### For more information:

National Children's Center for Rural and  
Agricultural Health and Safety  
1000 North Oak Avenue  
Marshfield, WI 54449  
☎ 888-924-SAFE (7233)  
Fax: 715-389-4996  
Email: [nccrahs@mfldclin.edu](mailto:nccrahs@mfldclin.edu)  
Website:  
<http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children/>



## Snowmobiling can be a fun family activity.

- ❄ Snowmobiling can be a wonderful activity for families to spend time together **and** enjoy the beauty of winter.
- ❄ To keep snowmobiling fun and safe, requires adults to role model safe behavior and assess youth readiness to participate in snowmobile recreation.

### How are youth injured?

- ❄ **As drivers:** due to lack of experience or physical inability to control the weight or speed of a snowmobile
- ❄ **Caution:** the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends youth be at least 16 years old to drive a snowmobile.
- ❄ **As passengers:** due to the risk-taking behaviors (excessive speed, alcohol use) of other snowmobile operators, including adults
- ❄ **As bystanders:** as pedestrians or as occupants of a sled being towed by a snowmobile

## Snowmobile Safety and Youth: When Can a Youth Drive or Ride?

Deciding whether a youth is ready to ride or drive a snowmobile depends on an adult's assessment of the youth's ability to safely participate. This table lists important factors to consider. Since youth develop at a different rates, it is strongly recommended that parents/guardians consult a pediatrician when making this important decision.

| Characteristic   | Factors to Consider  |
|--|--|
| Essential<br>What are the physical, mental, and emotional capabilities of the youth?             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to snowmobile.</li> <li>• Ability to comprehend basic instructions and follow directions.</li> <li>• Balance and muscle strength to ride or drive a snowmobile.</li> <li>• Ability to support a fitted, approved helmet.</li> <li>• Maturity to operate a motorized vehicle.</li> </ul>  |
| Experience<br>How much experience does the youth have?   | <p>A certified training course provides a youth with the opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the workings, maintenance, preparation and repair of the snowmobile.</li> <li>• Develop and practice <b>skills</b> of safe operation on snow.</li> <li>• Know the procedures of winter survival and emergency preparedness.</li> <li>• Learn the local and state snowmobile laws.</li> <li>• Understand the rules of courtesy when snowmobiling.</li> <li>• A new youth operator should be observed over a period of time in a controlled environment before heading out for an extended trail ride. As skills are demonstrated, endurance and capabilities increase, greater responsibility can be given to the youth operator.</li> </ul> |
| Equipment<br>Is needed equipment available, in good repair and match youth size and functioning? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select a suitably sized machine to safely operate that includes the proper horsepower and easy access to controls.</li> <li>• Maintain the snowmobile in good working condition.</li> <li>• Provide emergency equipment (matches, water, flashlight, tow rope), cold-weather gear (extra clothing, sleeping bag, shelter), tools and replacement parts.</li> <li>• Outfit the youth with appropriate safety equipment for riding conditions. Equipment should include certified helmet with face protection, layers of warm clothing, gloves/mitts, boots, and windproof, water repellant outer layer.</li> </ul>   |
| Environment<br>Are weather, terrain, light, and regulatory conditions suitable?                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate machines on groomed trails designated for snowmobile use. Avoid frozen bodies of water and areas prone to avalanches.</li> <li>• Ride during times of best visibility. Avoid dawn, dusk, and dark.</li> <li>• Avoid riding during times when there is increased risk of encountering snowmobilers operating under the influence of alcohol.</li> <li>• Obey local and state laws.</li> <li>• Know weather and trail conditions before riding.</li> <li>• Respect private property; trail boundaries, wildlife and other snowmobiles.</li> </ul>   |

