

SNOWMOBILE SAFETY SNAPSHOT

The Grey Bruce Health Unit newsletter for snowmobilers

Winter
2019/2020



BE READY FOR THE RIDE

As the snowy season quickly approaches, many people who live in or visit Grey and Bruce Counties are looking forward to getting out their snowmobiles and hitting the trails with friends. Snowmobiling can be a great way to support our mental and physical health: enjoying the outdoors, getting some moderate physical activity, and spending time with other members of our communities.

Snowmobiling has its risks too. Running into trees or other snowmobiles, rollovers, and riding in unsafe conditions can all cause serious injuries or even death. Grey Bruce has a higher than average rate of emergency department visits for off-road transportation injuries.

Before enjoying the benefits that snowmobiling has to offer, important precautions must be taken in order to keep safe out on the snow.

Follow these tips to avoid injury and maximize your fun this winter:

- **Know the risks** – snowmobile injuries and deaths are often due to not wearing a helmet, driving too fast, on-road riding, and carrying passengers.
- **Wear an approved helmet** if you are a driver or a passenger – it's the law.
- **Drive sober.** Alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs severely impact your ability to operate a snowmobile safely. It's also against the law and could result in loss of all driving privileges.
- Take the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs' (OFSC) **Motorized Snow Vehicle Operator's Course** which looks at safe operating practices, the law, first aid and more.
- **Be prepared.** Dress appropriately and keep a fully stocked emergency kit on hand.

For more tips and resources, visit:
publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/snowmobiling

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SNOWMOBILES & KIDS: THE FACTS

The safest way for a child to enjoy snowmobiling is as a spectator. This is a difficult truth for many adult caregivers to accept, especially if they grew up riding. Knowing the risks is key to making an informed decision about how and when kids should be allowed to snowmobile.

But, what are those risks exactly? And why is there more danger for kids than adults?

Snowmobiles are powerful machines that can go faster than 100 kilometres per hour and weigh over 270 kilograms. People can be injured in a variety of ways while snowmobiling, including: snowmobile rollovers, falling or being thrown from the vehicle, and colliding with stationary or moving objects. The small bodies of children and teens are more vulnerable to these risks. Due to the strength and stamina needed to hold on tight for a whole ride, kids are not strong enough to be snowmobile passengers until at least age 6. The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends children continue to ride only as passengers until age 16, even on private property.

Snowmobiles can be lots of fun, but they are not children's toys.

Staying safe is the first step to enjoying the winter season.

While some models of snowmobile are marketed as "kid-sized" these are still too big, fast, and strong for children to have the control needed for safe operation. If you ride with young people, model safe behaviours by always being prepared for weather and trail conditions, having the right equipment, and driving safely.

For your safety and that of your passenger, you must know and understand all of the information available at www.ofsc.on.ca/safety and Ontario's Motorized Snow Vehicles Act prior to operating a snowmobile.

*For additional tips and resources, visit:
publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/snowmobiling*

