

SNOWMOBILE - SAFETY

Hand Signals

Giving clear, easy-to-see hand signals are vital to safe snowmobile riding.

Be sure to never make hand signals subtle, always make deliberate signals.

Be sure that the drivers behind you can see any signal you make.

Hand signals are a very reliable way to communicate while riding.

Stop: Arm raised from the shoulder and extended straight up over the head with palm of hand flat.

Left Turn: Left arm extended straight out from the shoulder and pointing in the direction of the turn.

Right Turn: Bend your left arm at the elbow to shoulder height; with your hand pointing straight up and your palm flat, your arm should make a right angle.

Oncoming Sleds: Guide your snowmobile to the right while pointing to the trail over your head, so your signal can be seen.

Slowing: Left arm extended out and down from the side of the body with a downward

flapping motion of hand to signal warning or caution.

Sleds Following: Arm raised, elbow bent with thumb pointing backward, in hitchhiking motion move arm forward to backward over your shoulder.

Last Sled in Line: Left arm raised at shoulder height, elbow bent and forearm vertical with hand clenched in a fist.

Planning

Planning is a large part of having a successful snowmobile trip.

You should plan prior to riding where you will ride, how long you will ride, and with whom you will ride.

Planning also includes informing someone of your snowmobile plans.

Where you will ride: Before you start riding, decide the routes and trails you will be riding.

Create a plan using detailed maps for the planned riding area.

How long you will ride: When choosing a trail with the maps, always consider how long you want to ride.

Determine the time period by the maps and, if possible, an experienced rider's judgment.

Take into account passengers or other riders, gasoline/supplies, and added time for stopping and enjoying the sites along the trail.

Who you will ride with: When riding snowmobiles, always ride in a group or use the buddy system, preferably a buddy who will stay with you throughout your journey and not leave you behind.

If you are new, ride with someone who is experienced, patient and willing to help you learn the proper way to snowmobile.

If you are riding in a group, choose a group of riders with equal or better riding experience, or a group of riders who will be considerate of yours and everyone else's abilities.

Notify someone of your plans: Before you begin your trip, make sure someone reliable knows where you plan to go, whom you are going with, when you are leaving and when you will return.

If the trip involves an overnight stay, include information on where you will stay and contact numbers.

This is most important since time becomes critical if you experience an accident or an emergency.

Tools

Most manufacturers create a small spot for tool storage just inside your hood, or the inside of the seat “trunk.”

Basic tools are generally included in a container for your machine.

The tool kit, which should always be with you, should contain:

- Flathead screw driver
- Phillips head screwdriver
- Pliers
- Spark plug wrench
- Adjustable wrench
- Electrical tape
- Rag
- Cord (specifically made for starting manual start snowmobiles)
- Spare spark plugs
- Spare belt
- Tow strap

Ice Safety

The safest snowmobiling rule is to never cross lakes or rivers since it can never be guaranteed that ice of any thickness will support a snowmobile.

Ice is always dangerous. Do not venture out onto lakes or rivers unless you are absolutely certain that it is safe.

Besides the danger of plunging through the ice, you have far less traction for starting, turning, and stopping on ice than on snow.

Always use extreme caution when riding on ice. Always travel at low speeds. The machine is hard to control on ice, so fast stops are impossible and spins are far too common.

To stop, let up on the throttle slowly allowing the machine to coast to a stop. Controlling your machine is best when seated.

Collisions on lakes account for a significant number of accidents because riders too often believe that lakes are flat, wide open areas, free of obstructions.

Remember, if you can ride and turn in any direction while operating on a lake, so can other riders. Therefore, the threat of a collision can come from any direction.

If you choose to snowmobile on the ice, be absolutely certain that the ice is safely frozen. Don't trust the judgment of other snowmobilers. You are responsible for your own safe snowmobiling.

Drowning is a leading cause of snowmobile fatalities. If you ride on ice often, consider wearing a buoyant flotation snowmobile suit. It is also a good idea to have a set of commercial ice picks, with spring-loaded sleeves that cover the points, attached to a cord so they can be threaded through the sleeves of your snowmobile suit.

If you go through the ice, stay calm.

Remember that your snowmobile suit (even a non-buoyant one) and helmet may keep you afloat for several minutes.

Extend your arms out forward in front of you on the unbroken ice surface to catch yourself.

Kick your feet to propel you onto the ice, like a seal. If the ice keeps breaking, continue moving toward shore or the direction from which you came.

Use anything sharp, like ice picks, keys or a knife to dig into the ice to help pull you forward.

Don't remove your gloves or mitts. Once you are on the ice, crawl or roll away from the hole.

Don't stand up until you are well away from the hole.