8 smart tips for safe snowmobiling.



The holiday break is the perfect time to get in some safe snowmobiling with friends and family. Before you glide off into the winter wonderland, remind yourself of these safety guidelines.

1. **Do a pre-ride maintenance check.** Before the first ride of the season, follow these annual maintenance tips to bring your snowmobile out of hibernation. And before every ride, check over your snowmobile to make sure everything is working properly. This pre-ride checklist from the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association (ISMA) is a good guide.

2. **Tell someone your ride plan.** Leave word with friends or family at home about your intended route and about how long you plan to be gone. That way if you get stranded, someone can come and find you. Don't rely on your cell phone to save you — coverage could be dicey in remote areas.

3. **Bring a friend.** The buddy system isn't just for schoolkids. Having a friend snowmobiling with you is not only more fun, it's safer. In case of an emergency or breakdown, two heads (and two pairs of hands) are better than one.

4. **Dress for safety.** There's nothing stylish about frostbite or hypothermia. Dress in warm layers, with a windproof outer layer, and waterproof, insulated gloves. Protect your head and vision with a safety-certified helmet and goggles that offer sun and glare protection.

5. **Don't drink and ride.** Impaired riding is one of the top causes of snowmobiling fatalities. Alcohol impairs judgment, slows your reaction time, and increases your susceptibility to cold and hypothermia. Save the adult beverages for after the ride.

6. **Stay off the water.** It’s difficult to accurately gauge the strength of the ice on a frozen pond, lake or river, and ice conditions can change in a matter of hours. The average weight of a snowmobile is around 500 pounds (plus your weight); don’t risk breaking through and drowning. Even if you are rescued from the water, severe hypothermia could result.

7. **Use extra caution at night.** Snowmobiling is much safer by day. If you do choose to ride at night, significantly reduce your speed, stay alert for obstacles and other riders, and stick to familiar terrain. If you want to explore new trails, do it by daylight.

8. **Follow the rules.** Adhere to your state’s regulations for registering your snowmobile. Some states have age restrictions on riding, requiring supervision of younger riders.
   Follow your state’s rules for signaling turns, slowdowns and stops, too as they may vary. In states where they are applicable, use these basic hand signals:

    - Left turn: Extend left arm straight out to side
    - Right turn: Extend left arm out with forearm raised, elbow at 90-degree angle
    - Stop: Extend left arm straight up
    - Slow: Extend left arm out and angle toward the ground

Of course, you can’t plan for everything, and accidents happen. For those times, Patriot is there with Snowmobile Insurance that can cover your ride, your trailer, medical expenses for injuries, and more.