



Michigan Snowmobile Regulations, Operations, Registration, and Permitting

LEGAL DEFINITION OF A SNOWMOBILE

"Snowmobile" means any motor-driven vehicle designed for travel primarily on snow or ice of a type that utilizes sled-type runners or skis, an endless belt tread, or any combination of these or other similar means of contact with the surface upon which it is operated, but is not a vehicle that must be registered under the Michigan vehicle code, 1949 PA 300, MCL 257.1 to 257.923.

SNOWMOBILE OPERATION

A snowmobile may operate on a public highway under the following conditions:

- A snowmobile may be operated on the right-of-way of a public highway (except a limited-access highway) if it is operated at the extreme right of the open portion of the right-of-way and with the flow of traffic on the highway. Snowmobiles operated on a road right-of-way must travel in single file and shall not be operated abreast except when overtaking or passing another snowmobile.
- A snowmobile may be operated on the roadway or shoulder when necessary to cross a bridge or culvert if the snowmobile is brought to a complete stop before entering onto the roadway or shoulder and the operator yields the right-of-way to any approaching motor vehicle on the highway.
- A snowmobile may be operated across a public highway, other than a limited access highway, at right angles to the highway for the purpose of getting from one area to another when the operation can be done safely and another vehicle is not crossing the highway at the same time in the immediate area. An operator must bring his/her snowmobile to a complete stop before proceeding across the public highway and must yield the right-of-way to all oncoming traffic.
- Snowmobiles may be operated on a highway in a county road system, which is not normally snowplowed for vehicular traffic; and on the right-of-way or shoulder when no right-of-way exists on a snowplowed highway in a county road system, outside the corporate limits of a city or village, which is designated and marked for snowmobile use by the county road commission having jurisdiction.

A person shall not operate a snowmobile:

- While under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- At a rate of speed greater than is reasonable for existing conditions.
- In a forest nursery, planting area or public lands posted or reasonably identifiable as an area or forest reproduction when growing stock may be damaged or any designated wild, wilderness or natural area in the state.
- On the frozen surface of public waters within 100 feet of a person, including a skater, not in or upon a snowmobile or within 100 feet of a fishing shanty or shelter except at the minimum speed required to maintain forward movement of the snowmobile, or on an area that has been cleared for ice skating, unless the area is necessary for gaining access to the public water.
- Within 100 feet of a dwelling between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m. at a speed greater than the minimum required to maintain forward movement of the snowmobile.
- Upon the land of another without consent of the owner or their agent, as required by the recreational trespass act.

- In an area open to public hunting during the November 15-30 firearm deer season from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
- While transporting a bow unless it is unstrung or encased, or a firearm unless it is unloaded and securely encased.
- On or across a cemetery or burial ground, airport, railroad or a railroad right-of-way, or within 100 feet of a sledding, skiing or skating area.
- To chase, pursue, worry or kill any wild bird or animal.
- In a public or private parking lot in a careless or negligent manner.

Accident reporting

- The law requires that the operator of a snowmobile involved in an accident resulting in injury to, or death of, any person, or property damage in an estimated amount of \$100 or more, must immediately notify a law enforcement agency within the county in which the accident occurred.

Driver license information

Suspended Driver License: You may not operate a snowmobile if your license to operate an automobile has been suspended or revoked by Michigan or your home state.

Points assessed to your driver record: A person convicted of manslaughter, negligent homicide or a felony resulting from snowmobile operation shall have six points assessed against his/her driver record. A person convicted of operating a snowmobile while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, or with an unlawful blood alcohol content shall have six points assessed against his/her driver record. A person who is convicted of operating a snowmobile while visibly impaired due to consumption of alcohol or a controlled substance shall have four points assessed against his/her driver record.

Restrictions on youthful operation of a snowmobile

A person under the age of 12:

- May not operate a snowmobile without direct supervision of an adult, except on property owned or controlled by the parent or legal guardian.
- May not cross a highway or street.

A person who is at least 12 but less than 17 years of age:

- May operate a snowmobile if they have a valid snowmobile safety certificate in their immediate possession or are under direct supervision of a person 21 years of age or older.
- May not cross a highway or street without having a valid snowmobile safety certificate in their immediate possession.

SAFETY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Snowmobile safety education training is recommended for all snowmobile operators and is required for youth ages 12 to 17. [Click here for a listing of Statewide Snowmobile Safety Courses.](#)

REGISTRATION, TRAIL PERMITS, AND OWNERSHIP

Registering a Snowmobile

All snowmobiles must be registered unless used on private property. A three-year registration is issued for \$30. The snowmobile registration number is printed on the three-year snowmobile decal. Snowmobile decals must be displayed on "each side of the forward half of the cowl above the footwell of the snowmobile."

Registering a Historic Snowmobile

Owners may elect to register snowmobiles 26 or more years old and owned solely as a collector's item as a historic snowmobile. Historic snowmobiles are limited to occasional use and for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses, including mechanical testing. The registration has a one-time cost of \$50. Unlike regular snowmobile registrations, the historic registration is non-expiring and cannot be transferred with the snowmobile to a new owner.

A single historic snowmobile decal is issued and is placed above or below the headlight or, if the historic snowmobile was not originally equipped with a headlight, on the forward half of the cowl above the footwell.

Transferring Ownership of a Snowmobile

Snowmobiles are not titled. Transfer of ownership can be done online through [ExpressSOS](#) or at a Secretary of State office.

Snowmobile Trail Permits

In addition to the regular 3-year snowmobile registration, all snowmobiles, except those operated exclusively on lands owned or under the control of the snowmobile owner or those operated on frozen waters for ice fishing, must display an annual Snowmobile Trail Permit sticker. This applies to both residents and nonresidents. A trail permit is not required for snowmobiles registered as a historic snowmobile.

[Trail Permits](#) cost \$48 each and expire on September 30 each year. The generated revenue is designated to develop and maintain snowmobile trails. Trail Permit stickers are displayed on the front of the snowmobile, centered on the hood directly above the headlight.

Snowmobile trail permits are available at the following:

- Online through the [DNR E-License Web site](#) (your sticker will be mailed to you within 7-10 days)
- Online through the [The Michigan Snowmobile Association](#)
- In person at a number of [DNR Customer Service Centers](#)
- In person at a number [DNR Hunting and Fishing License Vendors](#)

Display of trail permit sticker

The trail permit sticker needs to be permanently affixed to the forward half of the snowmobile directly above or below the headlight.

Snowmobiles are exempt from the trail permit sticker if they are:

1. operated exclusively on lands owned or under the control of the owner

2. exclusively operated in a special event of limited duration which is conducted according to a prearranged schedule under a permit from the governmental unit having proper jurisdiction
3. a snowmobile used solely for transportation on the frozen surface of public waters for the purpose of ice fishing (but must still be registered)

Before operating:

- If owned by a nonresident, before operation in Michigan, a snowmobile must display a valid registration from the operator's home state or province, or be registered in Michigan.
- The registration certificate expires on September 30 of the year indicated on the decal.
- The color of the decal changes by year of expiration.
- Any time a registered snowmobile is sold to another person, the registration also must be transferred. Contact the Secretary of State for transfer information.
- State law requires that you affix the registration decals issued to the snowmobile to each side of the forward half of the cowl above the footwell. Beginning July 1, 1999, the registration decals display the registration number assigned to the snowmobile.
- A person who desires to operate a snowmobile in this state shall obtain a snowmobile trail permit sticker. The snowmobile trail permit sticker shall be valid for a period of one year, which begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year.
- The trail permit sticker shall be permanently affixed to the forward half of the snowmobile directly above or below the headlight.
- Snowmobile trail permits are available from snowmobile dealers, DNR offices and retail license agents throughout Michigan.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT

Brakes: Each snowmobile must have a breaking system capable of:

- Stopping the snowmobile in not more than 40 feet from an initial speed of 20 miles per hour while the snowmobile travels on packed snow carrying an operator who weighs 175 pounds or more.
- Locking the snowmobile's traction belt or belts.

Noise: Each snowmobile manufactured after July 1, 1977, shall be equipped with a muffler that does not exceed 78 decibels of sound pressure at 50 feet as measured by the 1974 SAEJ-192a.

Each snowmobile manufactured after July 1, 1980 and sold or offered for sale in this state, shall be equipped with a muffler that does not exceed 88 decibels, as measured using the 2004 society of automotive engineers standard J2567.

Helmet: All persons operating or riding on a snowmobile must wear a Department of Transportation approved crash helmet.

Lighting: All snowmobiles must display a lighted head-light and taillight at all time during operation. However, the headlight shall not be covered with a lens cap of any color.

ADDITIONAL LINKS

[Additional DNR Snowmobile Information](#)

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/SnowmobileRegs_268169_7.pdf

http://www.michigan.gov/sos/0,8611,7-127-1585_15242-34640--,00.html

<http://www.snowmobile-ed.com/michigan>

<http://www.snowmobilecourse.com/usa/michigan/>

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/SnowmobileRegs_268169_7.pdf

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10365_14824-32293--,00.html