

WILLMAR SNOWMOBILE OPERATING RULES

Each year the first snowfalls result in the first complaints to local law enforcement agencies about snowmobilers' driving behavior, and this year is no exception. The most common complaints received by the Willmar Police Department are of speed, nighttime noise, and of machines being operated in prohibited areas—on sidewalks, public parks and school grounds, and private property. Here is a rundown of the Willmar City Code's restrictions on snowmobile and ATV operation, along with some general safety practices.

- ◆ It is **unlawful to operate on private property of another** without the permission of the owner, or **on sidewalks**, or **on publicly owned lands including parks, recreation areas, playgrounds, and school property**.
- ◆ **No person may operate a snowmobile in excess of 20 miles per hour.** This is more restrictive than the state-established limit of 30 mph in municipalities.
- ◆ **No snowmobile may be operated within the city between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am** unless the operator is returning to his or her home after operating out of city limits.
- ◆ Snowmobiles operated on city streets must **travel in single file**.
- ◆ Snowmobiles are required to **slow and yield the right of way** to any pedestrian or any vehicle approaching an intersection which constitutes an immediate hazard.
- ◆ It is **unlawful** to operate a snowmobile or ATV in a manner that creates **loud, unnecessary, or unusual noise**.
- ◆ Persons **under twelve years of age may not operate a snowmobile on a public street**. Any operator born after December 31, 1979, must possess a valid snowmobile safety certificate.
- ◆ By state law, snowmobiles may **not be operated on the surface of County State Aid Roads**. In Willmar, this includes 19th Av, Willmar Av, Lakeland Dr, 7th St, CR 5, NW 15th Av.
- ◆ Snowmobiles must operate only on the outside slope and ditch bottom of roads; after dark they must ride in the same direction as the nearest traffic lane. They must not operate in the median of a divided highway.
- ◆ Do not operate a snowmobile or ATV when under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or when fatigued or ill.
- ◆ Excessive speed contributes to most fatal snowmobile crashes. Remember that there is a statewide speed limit of 50 mph on all public lands, waters, and trails. At that speed it will take over 300 feet to stop—and high beam headlights on a snow machine will only illuminate a distance of about 200 feet.
- ◆ Remember that it will take a minimum of five inches of good, clear ice on lakes to support a snowmobile. Aeration systems operating on many area lakes can cause daily shifts in open water areas and ice strength, as does the moving water of a river.

Violations of these laws are not only dangerous, they are upsetting to many people in the community and can result in significant consequences. You must remember that your behavior can affect how other people view the sport, and misbehavior has resulted in additional restrictions in some communities. Youthful operators must be made aware of the requirements for operating in town additional to state laws, and must wear their helmets.

We hope this information will help snowmobile operators adapt their driving practices to comply with the additional requirements for operating in Willmar. Please make safety your foremost priority when operating a snowmobile this winter. Questions about this information may be directed to the Willmar Police Department at 235-2244.