

Preventing injuries for

SNOWMOBILING



TOP TIPS

- Snowmobilers should be older than 16 years of age in order to have the strength and stamina to operate a snowmobile safely.
- Graduated licensing should be introduced for all new snowmobilers.
- Wear a helmet that is up to the standard approved for motorcycles. Wear insulated and waterproof snowmobile suits, gloves, boots, and goggles.
- Avoid traveling alone and in unfamiliar settings.
- Carry no more than one passenger. The passenger should not be younger than 6 years of age (in order to have the strength and stamina to travel safely as a passenger).
- Do not tow any passengers on sleds, inner tubes, or other such devices.
- Avoid excessive speeds and avoid crossing ice surfaces. Previous research conducted by Dr. Charles Tator and ThinkFirst (now part of Parachute) indicates that 26 snowmobile related deaths were due to drowning.
- Avoid riding after dark.
- Avoid riding on public roads and highways.

RISK FACTORS TO CONSIDER

ALCOHOL: previous research indicates, where information was available, alcohol consumption was involved in 57% of snowmobile injuries.

SPEED: excessive speeds increase the chance of injury.

TRAILS: The Canada Council of Snowmobile Organizations indicates that around 80% of snowmobile related deaths occur off-trail, and less than 20% occur on properly maintained trails. Interestingly, around 80% of the total number of kilometers ridden each year occurs on maintained trails, while about 20% is ridden off-trail. This suggests that a high number of fatalities result from a small amount of off-trail riding.

TIME OF DAY: riding after dark will increase risk of injury.

EQUIPMENT: wearing a helmet will reduce the likelihood of injury.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- In Ontario, the overall injury rate for snowmobile riders is 3.17%.
- Previous research conducted by Dr. Charles Tator and ThinkFirst (now part of Parachute) indicates that in four separate years there were a total of 290 catastrophic injuries in Ontario, of those 120 resulted in fatality. The risk of catastrophic injury in snowmobiling is very high: 88 participants per 100 000 sustain a catastrophic injury annually.
- Between 2000 and 2001 snowmobiling injuries were the most common injuries in winter sports and recreation.
- During the ThinkFirst-Tator study, snowmobiling was the commonest cause of both fatal and non-fatal injuries in Ontario of any sport or recreational activity.
- Previous research indicates that the majority of injuries are sustained by males compared to females at a ratio of 6.25:1, despite a male to female participation rate of only 2:1
- Previous research also found that the majority of injuries, 62.1%, occurred in riders younger than thirty.
- Of the 290 individuals with catastrophic injuries in previous research, 33.4% sustained head injuries, 30% sustained chest injuries and 25.5% sustained spine injury.
- Of the 120 fatalities in previous research, 79 (65.8%) were due to head injuries.

For more information on this and other sport and recreation injury topics, please refer to the following text: Tator, C.H. (Ed.) (2008). *Catastrophic Injuries in Sports and Recreation: Causes and Prevention – A Canadian Study*. Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated



Parachute is bringing attention to preventable injury and helping Canadians reduce their risk of injury and enjoy long lives lived to the fullest.

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