

# RECREATIONAL VEHICLES BEST PRACTICES

Courtesy of FOCA

Enjoying the outdoor activities is one of the main reasons for purchasing cottage property, so it is important that everyone do their part to ensure the water and environment is safe for all.

## **BEST PRACTICES – ATV, ORV, SNOWMOBILES**

- **Do** – know the rules to safely operate your recreational vehicle. Be it a kayak, sail boat, power boat, ATV or snowmobile it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the proper training, documentation and safety equipment on board.
- **Do - respect your neighbours and the environment.**
- **Do** - take steps to reduce noise pollution with all vehicles. Continual or repetitive operation in the same area can aggravate the impact of motorized activities.
- **Do** - maintain motorized vehicles to reduce contamination from fuels, wastewater and other hazardous or toxic chemicals.
- **Do Not** - fuel recreational vehicles while on the ice or near a waterway. If you enjoy winter recreation, don't forget to bring back your garbage for proper disposal.
- **Do Not** - travel across private property without permission.

## **ATV AND OFF ROAD VEHICLES**

### **Basic Rules & Regulations:**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has jurisdiction over the use of off-road vehicles (ORVs) and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). They have published a *Driver's Handbook* that includes the rules and requirements for ATVs and ORVs. (see link, following page) Below are some of the key points covered in the Handbook including some recent changes. Please note that the rules differ depending on where you are riding your vehicle.

### **Off-Road Riding:**

To ride an ATV/ORV off-road you must:

- Be at least 12 years old, unless directly supervised by an adult or while driving on land occupied by the owner of the ATV/ORV.
- Carry the ATV/ORV's registration permit or a true copy.
- Register and display a rear licence plate (except in exempt areas like far northern Ontario).
- Insure your vehicle under a motor vehicle liability policy.
- Wear an approved motorcycle helmet, securely fastened under the chin with a chin strap.
- Not drive if impaired by alcohol or drugs.

## **On-Road Riding:**

To ride an ATV/ORV on a public road, where permitted<sup>1</sup>, you must:

- Be at least 16 years old to drive and hold at least a valid G2 or M2 licence
- Be a minimum of eight years of age to be a passenger
- Wear an approved motorcycle helmet, securely fastened under the chin with a chin strap
- Wear a seat belt, where provided
- Travel at speeds less than the posted speed limit unless otherwise specified by the municipality
  - no more than 20 km/h on roads with a posted speed limit of 50 km/h or less
  - no more than 50 km/h on roads with a posted speed limit greater than 50 km/h
- Be driving in the same direction as traffic
- Travel on the shoulder - if the shoulder is unsafe or impassable or not wide enough, an ATV/ORV can be driven on the travelled portion of the road
- Have headlights and tail lights on
- Not drive if impaired by alcohol or drugs

Please refer to the link below for a complete list of the rules regarding riding ATV/ORVs.

## **RESOURCES**

- **Ontario Ministry of Transportation** Driver's Handbook covers operation of ATVs, ORVs, and Snowmobiles under the Off-road Vehicles section:  
[www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/handbook](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/handbook).

## **SNOWMOBILES**

### **Basic Snowmobile Rules & Regulations:**

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has jurisdiction over the use of snowmobiles. They have published a *Driver's Handbook* that includes the rules and requirements for snowmobiles. Below are some of the key points covered in the Handbook. As with ATV/ORVs, the rules for driving snowmobiles depend on where you are driving them:

- If you are driving on recreational trails that are off your own property, then you need to be 12 years old and have a valid **Motorized Snow Vehicle Operator's License (MSVOL)**<sup>2</sup>.
- If you wish to drive along or across public roads where snowmobiles are allowed, then you must be at least 16 years of age and have either a valid MSVOL or a driver's license.

All snowmobiles must be registered with the MTO. This is a 'one time' event and registration can be transferred upon resale. The registration decal must be displayed on each side of your snowmobile and the exact location is defined by the MTO.

If you are driving the snowmobile off your personal property, then you must:

- Purchase an annual validation sticker and affix it to your registration decal.

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<sup>1</sup> Check with your Township/Municipality and note here any Bylaws regarding the riding of ATVs.

<sup>2</sup> An MSVOL is issued by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs in co-operation with the Ministry of Transportation. You must successfully pass a snowmobile driver training course to get a licence.

- Always carry your MSVOL and proof of registration
- Have liability insurance and always carry proof of it
- Wear an approved helmet whether you are driving, riding or being towed on a sled
- Have a membership to drive on private trails of a snowmobile organization and have permission to drive on any other private land.
- Obey the rules of local municipalities that may ban operation of snowmobiles on certain public roads.
- Travel at speeds less than the posted speed limit unless otherwise specified by the municipality
  - No more than 20 km/h on roads with a posted speed limit of 50 km/h or less
  - No more than 50 km/h on roads with a posted speed limit greater than 50 km/h
  - No more than 50 km/h on trails
- Not operate a snowmobile when impaired by alcohol or drugs.

## **RESOURCES**

- **Ontario Ministry of Transportation:** [www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/handbook](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/handbook)
  - The Driver's Handbook covers operation of ATVs, ORVs, and Snowmobiles under the Off-road Vehicles section.
- **Snowmobile Clubs:**
  - Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) – [www.ofsc.on.ca](http://www.ofsc.on.ca)