

## Snowmobile riding

2011

### Who can ride and where

A snowmobile can be driven on terrain by a person who is 15 years old or older. The driver must have at least a T license as he/she is riding along official snowmobile routes or riding on a road / crossing a road. Drunk driving regulations apply to snowmobile riders also in terrain.

Riding a snowmobile across terrain always requires permission from the land-owner. No special permission is required if one rides on official snowmobile routes and on ice-covered bodies of water. Finnish forest administration Metsähallitus grants permission for the state-owned lands under its care. Routes are established in those areas where snowmobile riding is popular. Due to this policy, the damage to nature is minimised.

### Regulations

One observes right-sided traffic on routes. The biggest permitted terrain speed on land is 60 km/h and 80 km/h on iced-over water areas. If there is a sleigh linked to the snowmobile - for the purpose of carrying people - the maximum speed is 40 km/h.

In addition to driving skill, the snowmobile riders most important safety device is protective helmet. It has been deemed mandatory for both the driver and the passenger. Helmet use is mandatory also for a passenger who travels in an open sleigh. The exception to mandatory helmet use is formed by certain vocational groups, such as professionals with reindeer husbandry and forestry tasks.

Snowmobiles must be registered and the technical part of the registration paper must be carried along during drive and produced to a traffic monitor upon request.



### Riding safely

As the popularity of snowmobiles has increased, so have the safety risks. Many snowmobile riders are unable to recognise or avoid the risk factors. The most common cause for accident is faulty or lacking observation regarding ones driving environment.

Annually about 10 people die while snowmobile riding and traffic insurance policies compensate injuries of over 400 people. Out of the fatalities, 70% occur while riding on ice. The most common cause of death on ice areas is drowning. Half of the fatal accidents feature alcohol use. Every other deceased belongs to the age group 41-60 years old. Out of those sustaining injuries, the most injury-prone age group is 21-40.

The driving environment of the snowmobile rider differs greatly from the driving environments of other vehicles. A snow-covered winter terrain

often looks deceptively harmless. Safe riding requires information about the risk factors of terrain traffic and means to avoid them. By recognising danger factors such as excessive situational speed, defects of the routes and other people moving in the terrain, danger factors can be taken into account and proper adjustments made.



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