NORTH DAKOTA

SNOWMOBILE

LAWS & SAFETY GUIDELINES

2015-2017

NORTH DAKOTA PARKS & RECREATION

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Dear Snowmobile Enthusiast:

Snowmobiling in North Dakota is a longtime favorite form of recreation for residents and out-of-state visitors. The proper operation and safe use of a snowmobile is crucial. This booklet provides useful information regarding the safe and lawful operation of snowmobiles in the State of North Dakota.

I would like to highlight some changes to the snowmobile law section:

- Resident snowmobile registration fee is now $50 for a 2 year period
- Non-resident public trails and access permit is now $25 per year
- Youth snowmobilers 10 – 11 years of age can now operate on public lands with their snowmobile certificate and being in direct presence of their parent or guardian.
- In addition, I would like to remind you about the importance of snowmobile registration for both residents and out-of-state visitors. Registration is required by law to operate on any public lands. Funding from registration supports snowmobile trail enhancements and maintenance, safety education programs and safety promotion. This funding helps provide for legendary snowmobile opportunities within North Dakota.

In addition to the youth riding age change, please remember, any person 12 and older, to legally operate a snowmobile on any public lands, must have either a valid driver's license or a snowmobile safety certification card which is obtained by passing the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department's snowmobile safety course. Snowmobile safety courses are offered throughout North Dakota.

To find scheduled courses, to set up a course in your area, to take the online course or any other questions regarding snowmobile usage, call 701-328-5357 or visit us at www.parkrec.nd.gov.

RIDE SAFE, RIDE SMART.

Mark Zimmerman
Director, North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department

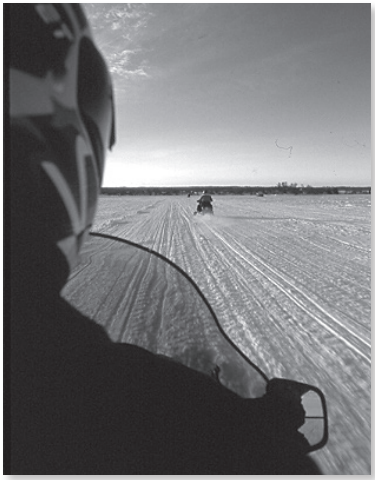
DEFINITIONS (NDCC 39-24-01)

Collector snowmobile: A snowmobile that is 25 years old or older, was originally produced as a separate identifiable make by a manufacturer, and is owned and operated solely as a collector's item.

Dealer: A person engaged in the business of buying, selling, or exchanging snowmobiles or who advertises or holds out to the public as being engaged in the buying, selling, or exchanging of snowmobiles.

Operate: To ride and control the operation of a snowmobile.

Operator: Every person who operates or is in actual physical control of a snowmobile.



Owner: A person, other than a lienholder, having the property or title to a snowmobile and who is entitled to the use or possession of that snowmobile.

Register: The act of assigning a registration number to a snowmobile.

Roadway: The portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel.

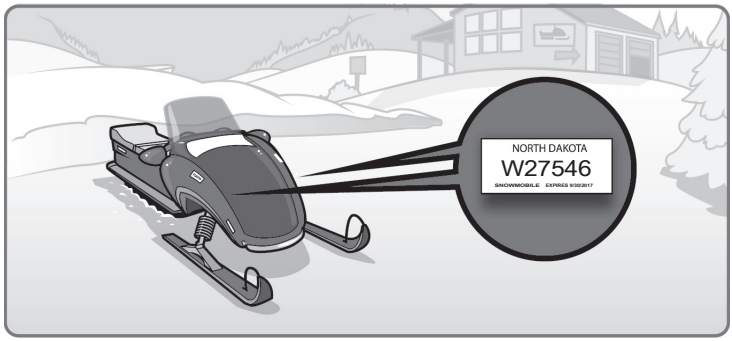
Snowmobile: "Snowmobile" means a self-propelled vehicle intended for off-road travel primarily on snow, having a curb weight of not more than one thousand two hundred pounds [544.31 kilograms], driven by track or tracks in contact with the snow, steered by a ski or skis in contact with the snow, and which is not wider than forty-eight inches [121.92 centimeters]. The terms does not include an off-highway vehicle as defined in chapter 39-29 converted to operate on tracks.

REGISTRATION

A. Application (NDCC 39-24-03)

The application for registration of each snowmobile is made to the North Dakota Department of Transportation at any licensing office statewide.

- The application should state each owner's name and address and be signed by at least one owner.
- A copy of the application is evidence of registration up to 30 days following the date of application.
- Upon receipt of the application and fees, the North Dakota Department of Transportation will register the snowmobile and assign it a registration number. Also, a certificate of registration will be issued and will include information regarding the name and address of the owner, make, year and serial number of the snowmobile.



B. Display (NDCC 39-24-03)

The registration number must be securely affixed on each side of the snowmobile in a position as to provide clear legibility for identification.

C. Fees (NDCC 39-24-03)

The registration fee for resident snowmobiles operating on public lands and trails is $50. This fee includes $5 for registration and a $45 trail tax which is used for the state trail system.

Registration and payment of fees is not required of (NDCC 39-24-04):

1. Snowmobiles owned and used by the United States, another state or its political subdivisions.
2. Snowmobiles registered in a foreign country and temporarily used in this state.
3. Snowmobiles validly licensed in another state and which have not been within this state for more than 30 consecutive days.
4. Snowmobiles used exclusively on private lands.

5. Snowmobiles incapable of speeds in excess of 10 miles per hour and with an engine displacement of less than 100 cubic centimeters.
6. Collector snowmobiles. The Department of Transportation may issue a special permit to a person to operate in a parade, organized group outings including races, rallies, or other promotional events, and for up to 10 days each year for personal transportation. The Department of Transportation may impose a reasonable restriction of a permittee and may revoke, amend, suspend, or modify a permit for cause.

D. Expiration & Renewal (NDCC 39-24-03)

Snowmobile registration fees must be paid on odd numbered years. The owner of a snowmobile can renew his or her registration by paying the $50 registration fee to the North Dakota Department of Transportation. The fine is $50 for no registration or expired registration.

E. Replacement (NDCC 39-24-03)

There is a $5 fee for the duplication or replacement of a registration number or registration card which is lost, mutilated or becomes illegible. The trail tax is not assessed on replacement decals.

Out-of-State Permit

If a snowmobile is exempt from registration under numbers 2 or 3, the owner is required to purchase a non-resident public trails and lands access permit. Permits are available for a **$25/year fee.**

A valid permit can be purchased from the following locations:

- Any North Dakota state park
- Online at **https://apps.nd.gov/pnr/snowmobile/**
- Participating snowmobile dealerships*
- North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department office
  1600 E. Century Ave. Suite #3
  Bismarck, ND 58503

All riders must have a valid permit in their immediate possession at all times while riding in-state.

**Any dealership wishing to sell the out-of-state snowmobile permit must contact our office at (701) 328-5357 by October 1 of each year.*

F. Transfer of Ownership (NDCC 39-24-06)

A new application for registration must be submitted to the North Dakota Department of Transportation within 15 days of transferring ownership.

GENERAL OPERATIONS

A. Required Equipment (NDCC 39-24-09)

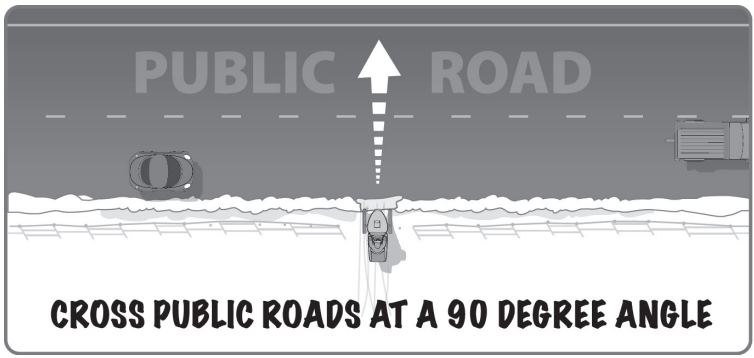
An individual can operate a snowmobile only if it is equipped with the following equipment, all of which must be in working order:

- At least one headlamp
- One taillamp
- Brakes
- A manufacturer-installed or equivalent muffler that is in good working order and connected to the snowmobile's exhaust system

B. Crossing Public Roads (NDCC 39-24-09)

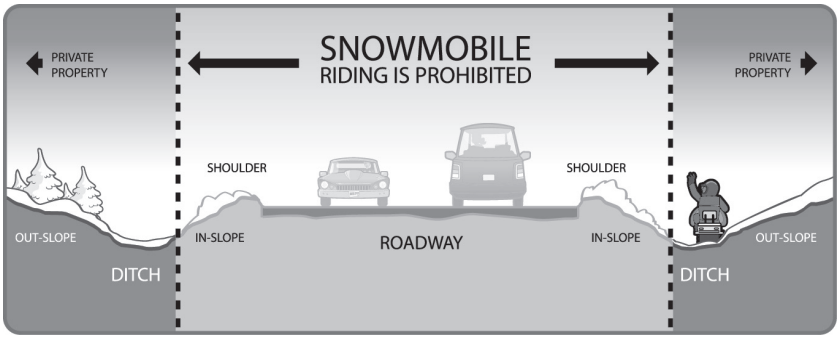
A snowmobile may make a direct crossing of a non-interstate street or highway if:

- The crossing is made at an angle of approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the highway and at a place where no obstruction prevents a quick and safe crossing.
- The snowmobile is brought to a complete stop before crossing the shoulder or main traveled way of the highway.
- The operator yields the right-of-way to all oncoming traffic which constitutes an immediate hazard.
- In crossing a divided highway, the crossing is made only at an intersection of a highway with another public street or highway.



C. Where You May Ride (NDCC 39-24-08)

- Private lands with the land owner's permission.
- Lands designated as snowmobile trails or riding areas.
- In the highway right-of-way, bottom of the ditch or along the outslope. It is illegal to operate on the shoulder, inside slope and roadway.
- In times that require the use of lights, you must travel in the same direction as other motor vehicles on the same side of the right-of-way. An operator of a snowmobile traveling on a snowmobile trail maintained by the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department which is within the right-of-way of any road, street or highway of this state is exempted from this rule. The operator shall wait for all traffic to clear the roadway before crossing bridges and other similar structures.



**** Contact your local law enforcement for any local ordinances.***

D. Where You May NOT Ride (NDCC 39-24-09)

- Any tree nursery or planting area.
- Any private land that is posted as prohibiting hunting/trespassing. The name of the person posting the land must appear on each sign in legible characters. The posted signs must be readable from outside the land and be placed conspicuously at a distance of no more than 880 yards apart. Land entirely enclosed by a fence or other enclosure is sufficiently posted by posting of these signs at or on all gates through the fence or enclosure.
- Within the right-of-way of any highway when towing a sled, skid, or any other vehicle, unless the object is connected to the snowmobile by a hinged swivel or secure hitch.

- Within the right-of-way of any interstate highway within this state except:
    - For emergency purposes; or
    - Across an interstate highway on an overpass or underpass, except where otherwise prohibited by law or by signing, provided the snowmobile crosses on the extreme right side of the overpass or underpass.

E. Liability Insurance (NDCC 39-24-09(11))

A person may not operate a snowmobile upon any property maintained, leased or owned by the North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department (i.e. state snowmobile trails) without liability insurance. The liability insurance insures the snowmobile owner named on the policy and any operator of that snowmobile, with permission of the owner. Upon request of a law enforcement officer, a person operating a snowmobile shall provide proof of liability insurance to that officer within 20 days.

F. Other Prohibitions (NDCC 39-24-09)

It is unlawful for any person to drive or operate any snowmobile in the following ways which are declared to be unsafe and a public nuisance:

- The speed limit in the right-of-way is the same as the posted speed limit on the adjacent road.
- At an unreasonable rate of speed in relation to surrounding circumstances.
- In a careless, reckless, or negligent manner that endangers the rider or property of another, or causes injury or damage to other persons or their property.
- While under the influence of intoxicating liquor or a controlled substance.
- No person under the age of 18 years may operate, ride, or otherwise be propelled on a snowmobile unless the person wears a safety helmet meeting United States Department of Transportation standards.

G. Youth Operators (NDCC 39-24-09.1)

- Youth snowmobilers 10 – 11 years of age can now operate on public lands with their snowmobile certificate and being in direct presence of their parent or guardian.
- Youth operators 12 years of age and older must possess a valid driver's license or have completed a snowmobile safety training course from the Parks and Recreation Department. However, there is no age or license requirement for youth operators riding on private land.
- North Dakota also accepts other states' snowmobile certifications.

SNOWMOBILING UNDER THE INFLUENCE (SUI)

It is unlawful to operate a snowmobile under the influence of a controlled substance or other hazardous substance.

A. Tests to Determine Alcohol and Drug Content (NDCC 39-24.1-01)

- A snowmobile operator on any public or private land is deemed to have given consent and shall permit a chemical test(s) of the blood, breath, or urine for the purpose of determining the alcohol or drug content.
- When a minor is taken into custody for operating a snowmobile with alcohol or drug content, or a combination thereof, the law enforcement officer shall diligently attempt to contact

the minor's parent or legal guardian to explain the cause for the custody and the implied consent chemical testing requirements.

B. Test Results

- Ten one-hundredths of one percent, at the time of the test, within 2 hours after operating the snowmobile, is evidence of snowmobiling under the influence.

C. Penalties (NDCC 39-24.1-01)

Upon conviction of operating a snowmobile while having alcohol or drug concentrations, a person is subject to minimum fines of:

- $250 and cannot ride for 60 days (1st Offense – Infraction)
- $350 and cannot ride for 1 year (2nd Offense – B Misdemeanor)
- $450 and cannot ride for 2 years (3rd Offense – B Misdemeanor)

SAFETY

A. Education & Training

Through courses that instruct North Dakotans in operation and safety, the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department's snowmobile education program is designed to prevent snowmobile-related accidents. By doing this we hope to make the public more aware of safety, danger and the environmental hazards caused by improper use of snowmobiles.

Safety Training & Education

For more safety and education information, **ridesafe.nd.gov.**

SAFE RIDERS!
You Make Snowmobiling Safe
snowmobile.org

Test your knowledge at the Safe Riders online safety quiz at **www.snowiasa.org**

B. Riding Attire

Wear proper clothing when on your snowmobile:

1. **Wear a Helmet.** Make certain your helmet is approved by the U.S. Department of Transportation, American National Standards Institute or the Snell Memorial Foundation. Your helmet should fit correctly and you should always use the chin strap.
2. **Use Eye Protection.** The best protection for snowmobile riders is protective goggles made with hard polycarbonate lenses. Eye injuries can also be prevented by wearing a helmet that comes with a protective shield.
3. **Wear Appropriate Clothing.** Clothes should be worn in layers, typically 3 layers. The first layer should be fabric that doesn't retain moisture. The second layer should be made of cotton or wool. The final layer is usually a snowmobile suit or something made of water and wind resistant materials.

Other important tips to remember about dressing for the ride:

- If riding over frozen water, invest in a buoyant suit.
- If riding at night, wear reflective clothing.
- Boots and gloves should also be made of water and wind resistant materials.

Appropriate Riding Attire

For more information on appropriate riding attire, visit **www.snowiasa.org**

SAFE RIDERS!
You Make Snowmobiling Safe
snowmobile.org

Get your snowmobile safety certification!

For more information, visit ridesafe.nd.gov.

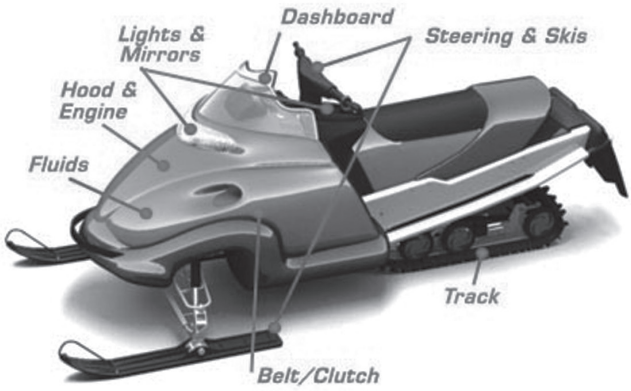
C. Know Your Parts

The snowmobile has six basic mechanical systems:

1. **Engine System & Chassis.** The engine is the power source which propels the snowmobile's drive system; most snowmobiles have a two-stroke engine. The chassis is the "backbone" or framework of the machine that supports each system of the snowmobile.
2. **Electrical System.** Parts that need electricity to function (headlights, tail lamps, hand warmers, instrument panels, etc.).
3. **Exhaust System.** Serves two functions: to carry waste away from the engine out through the muffler and to quiet the engine.
4. **Suspension System.** Components of the suspension work together to keep the track on the snow, allow for better handling and give a smoother, more comfortable ride.
5. **Steering System.** Various components including the skis that steer your snowmobile.
6. **Drive System.** Energy from the engine that turns wheels, belts and chains to move the track of your snowmobile.

This section will give details of the parts on your snowmobile.

NOTE: This is not a substitute for your snowmobile's owner's manual. Read that first for exact details about your snowmobile.



D. Planning Your Ride

Before venturing out in North Dakota, it is a good idea to plan your ride. When planning your ride, you need to ask yourself a series of questions:

Where Will I Be Riding?
Answering this question is vital in the event you get into an accident. This lets others know where to look for you.

How Long Will I Be Riding?
Make sure that you estimate the amount of time you are going to be gone and tell someone who isn't going on the ride with you. This ensures you have someone who knows when to come looking for you if you don't come back on time.

How Will I Get There?
Are you going to load your snowmobile onto a trailer or are you going to ride directly to the area?

Who Will I Be Riding With?
You should never ride alone, so help is available if there are any accidents or anyone gets stuck or breaks down.

What Should I Take With Me?
There are many things you should take with you when you go riding.

- **Tool kit** - Phillips and flat screwdrivers, adjustable pliers, wrench and electrical tape.
- **First aid kit** - Medical tape, different size bandages, pain relief pills, sterile wipes, latex gloves, antibiotic ointment and any prescription drugs you might be taking (inhaler).
- **Survival kit** - Pocket mirror, razor blade, fishing line, spare change, whistle, matches, small wax candles (tea light), candy bars, small flashlight, space blanket, sun block, aluminum foil, wire, sandpaper, map and compass.
- **Other items** - Nylon rope, extra gloves and cap, spare key, cell phone, radios, and toilet paper.

E. Pre-Ride Inspection

Prevent an unforeseen hazard by accomplishing a pre-ride inspection. Although the owner's manual is the best resource for your snowmobile, the following can be used as a reference for inspection:

- **Liquids** - Fuels, coolants, brake fluids and lubricants (oil injection)
- **Steering** - Moves easily, no items bent or cracked, also check skis
- **Cables & controls** - Throttle, brakes, emergency, stop switch
- **Electronics** - Lights: head and tail (high and low beams)
- **Suspension** - Proper give, springs aren't bent or cracked
- **Track** - Make sure it is free of packed snow and ice

F. Starting Procedures

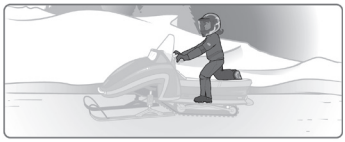
Below are guidelines for starting your snowmobile. Consult your owner's manual if you are unsure of the proper method.

- There are two ways to start your snowmobile, manually (pull-start) or using the electric start.
- You should be seated with both feet flat on the ground.
- Maintain both hands on the handlebars for secure handling.
- Make sure the key and the safety switch are in the ON position.
- If the engine is cold, put the choke in the ON position and start the engine according to your manual.
- Ensure the snowmobile is not in reverse, then go ahead and press the electric start button.

G. Riding Positions

There are four different riding positions:

Standing: Used when climbing a small hill or when greater visibility is needed.



Kneeling: Used to climb steep hills.

Posting: Used when traveling on rough terrain so your legs can absorb some of the up and down motion caused by ruts.

Seated: This is the most common riding position used mostly for comfort.

H. Snow Conditions & Terrain

Deep Snow

Deep snow requires a heavier use of throttle to prevent your snowmobile from getting stuck. Remember to make your turns wide to avoid digging deep into the snow. Try not to spin your track too much in deep snow to put off getting stuck.

Ice & Frozen Bodies of Water

The first thing to remember when traveling on ice is to slow down. Your stopping distance is greatly increased on ice as well as the chance that you will lose control. If you are going to travel on frozen bodies of water, ensure there is a minimum of an 8" base of solid ice beneath you. This is the amount it takes to support a person on a snowmobile. When crossing a frozen river, make the most direct route possible to guarantee the shortest travel and remember, just because there are tracks from previous riders, that does not make it safe for you to cross.

Incline
When climbing a hill, lean forward in the kneeling or standing position. Use enough speed to reach the top and do not stop until you are there to prevent sinking into the deep snow.

Decline
If you are descending a hill, move to the rear of your snowmobile, use the seated position and pump the brakes to stop if needed.

Traversing (Riding a side hill)
The kneeling position is best for traversing. Always lean toward the uphill side of the track to avoid a roll-over. If you are to dismount your snowmobile while on a side hill, always do it on the top hill side.

Night Riding
Nine out of ten snowmobile fatalities occur after dark. Why? Visibility is reduced and speedy riders overdrive their headlights.

Overdriving your headlights means going faster than what your lights can illuminate in front of you.

I. Hazardous Conditions

Avalanche
Avalanches are both predictable and preventable. Fifty percent of the world's avalanches are caused by snowmobiles. If you are riding in an area where you think an avalanche can occur, check the avalanche forecast before going out.

The following equipment should be kept with you when riding in an area where an avalanche is possible:

- Beacon
- Snow shovel (foldable)
- Avalanche probe
- Backpack

Whiteouts
Whiteouts occur when the ground is covered with snow and the sky is overcast, or during a blizzard when there is blowing snow. Both instances reduce visibility and make it harder to judge distances. A whiteout may also cause you to become disoriented. You should avoid riding during times of whiteout, but if you do ride, slow down.

J. Passengers & Towing

If your snowmobile allows for passengers, it is your responsibility as the operator to inform the passengers of the correct way to ride. No more than one or two passengers, depending on model, should be allowed to ride, with smaller children riding in front of the operator. Children under the age of 6 years old should not ride as passengers.

When towing with a snowmobile, avoid using a rope. Ropes can get wrapped in the track, around trees and other objects, and also cause loss of control. When towing, you should use a rigid tow bar connected with a hitch.

K. Responsible Riding Practices

The following is a list of responsible riding practices:

- We share the trails with others and we need to respect others' use.
- Others use the trail after you.
- Never chase animals.
- Keep noise levels down.
- Conserve energy (gasoline).
- Use common sense and be a responsible rider.
- Pack out what you pack in (leave no trace!).

L. Approved Snowmobiling Hand Signals

Stopping

Slowing

Right Turn

Left Turn

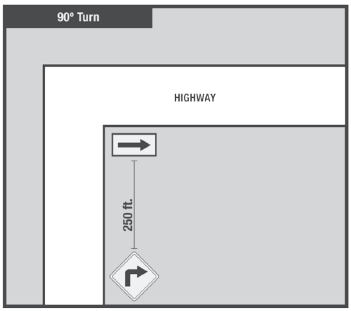
Sleds Following

Oncoming Sleds

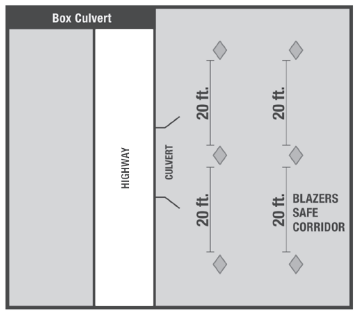
Last sled in line

M. Sign Guide

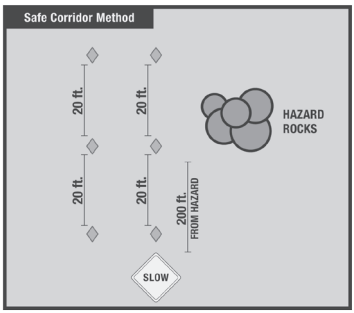
The following guides are samples of signing conditions represented on the state trail system. Please review the guides to better equip yourself for riding the trail system.



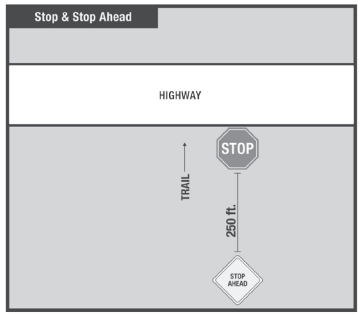
90 Degree Turn: *Slow down and prepare for a 90 degree turn in the trail.*



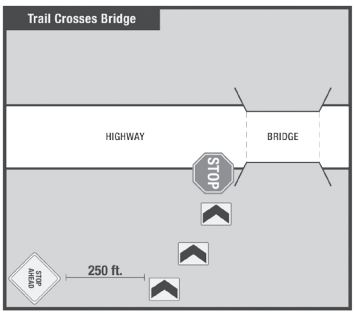
Box Culvert: *Follow the safe corridor made of reassurance (trail) blazers.*



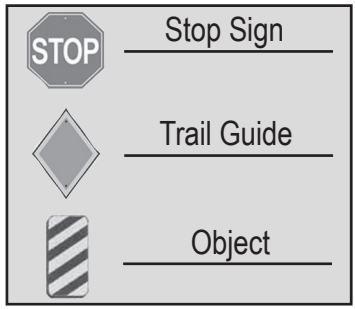
Safe Corridor Method: *Follow the safe corridor made of reassurance (trail) blazers for a safe trail.*



Stop & Stop Ahead: *Start slowing down at the stop ahead sign and come to a complete stop at the stop sign.*



Trail Crosses Bridge: *Obey the signs and come to a complete stop before crossing a bridge. Watch for oncoming traffic before crossing the bridge.*



Snowmobile Trail Signs: *Stay safe and follow all trail signs.*

Watch for Wildlife

The most pleasant places for winter riding are often the same places that deer, pheasants and other wildlife need for shelter.

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department reminds snowmobilers:

- Watch for wildlife and avoid winter habitat such as thickets, cattails and wooded areas.
- Steer clear of any visible concentrations of animals or birds.
- Snowmobiles can be used off an established trail while fox or coyote hunting, but chasing or harassing any animal is illegal.

Observers witnessing harassment or chasing of wildlife are encouraged to call Report All Poachers at (800) 472-2121; or Game and Fish enforcement at (701) 328-6604.

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

100 N. Bismarck Expressway
Bismarck, ND 58501-5095
701-328-6300

E-mail: ndgf@nd.gov
Website: gf.nd.gov

What is Snowmobile North Dakota?

The state snowmobile trail system is solely user funded by snowmobile registrations and a small portion of gas tax and relies heavily on volunteer support.

Snowmobile North Dakota (SND) is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization that oversees the recreation of snowmobiling across the state. The organization is contracted by the North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department to manage the state snowmobile trail system. SND is made up of 36 snowmobile clubs and over 2,000 memberships. Together these members make up 13 trail associations that volunteer time to maintain the trails.

Sled'N Snap

- Visit slednsnap.com
- Sign up
- Enter your photo to win a trailer!

(Prizes and partners listed online.)

Hit the Trails!

Come play in North Dakota's 2,800 miles of snowmobile trails... And discover where the adventure never ends.

RIDE SAFE.

RIDE SMART.

NORTH DAKOTA PARKS & RECREATION

» Partners in Responsible Riding

T RAVEL RESPONSIBLY

R ESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS

E DUCATE YOURSELF

A VOID SENSITIVE AREAS

D O YOUR PART

tread lightly!® ON LAND AND WATER

iasa International Association of Snowmobile Administrators

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1600 E. Century Avenue, Suite 3
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Help keep your trail GREEN... Keep North Dakota Clean If you pack it IN...pack it OUT!