

# 2012-2013 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Snowmobile Safety and Enforcement Report



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**PUB LE-203 2013**



# Table to Contents

Summary.....	3
History of Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatalities 1972-2012.....	4
History of Wisconsin Resident Snowmobile Registrations.....	4
History of Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatalities per Registrations.....	5
History of Nonresident Snowmobile Trail Passes .....	5
History of Certified Instructors & Students.....	6
Total Snowmobile Injury Incidents Reported.....	7
Alcohol Involvement in Snowmobile Fatalities.....	8
Helmet Use.....	9
Victim Operator Snowmobile Safety Training.....	9
Operator Experience.....	10
Age of Fatality victims.....	10
Number of Fatal Incidents by Speed.....	10
Number of Fatal Incidents by Type and location.....	11
Main Factors Involved in Incidents.....	12
Incidents Occurring After the Hours of Darkness.....	12
Number of Fatal Incidents by Time of Day.....	13
Number of Fatal Incidents by Day of Week.....	13
Snowmobile Fatality Summary.....	14-18
Citations Issued Summary (2012-2013).....	19

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# Introduction

## 2012-2013 Yearly Summary

The 2012-2013 Snowmobile Program Report was compiled from crash, registration and arrest data collected during Fiscal Year 2013 - July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013. There were a total of 20 fatal snowmobile incidents, a increase of ten from the previous snowmobile season. A series of freezing and thawing events early in the winter created unstable ice conditions and may have contributed to the five drowning's this season, which was high than usual. In 2006, the nighttime, 55 mph speed limit was implemented as an additional safety measure supported by the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs and the Governor's Snowmobile Recreation Council. Since this implementation, fatalities rates have decreased.

Snowmobile registrations totaled 224,716, a increase from last year which can be reflected from a number of factors - including the temperate weather and snow fall. There were 7,799 total students certified during the 2012-2013 season. Of those, 4,245 students were certified by 879 active volunteer snowmobile safety instructors and the remaining 3,554 students were certified through internet courses.

Conservation wardens are required to investigate all snowmobile fatalities. Wisconsin law also requires that a conservation warden or law enforcement officer be notified immediately of any snowmobile incident that results in an injury requiring medical treatment by a physician. In addition, the operator(s) involved in these reportable incidents must file a written report with the Department of Natural Resources within 10 days.

## *Contributing Factors to Fatal Snowmobile Accidents*

- ☞ Alcohol and speed continue to be the main contributing factors in fatal snowmobile incidents during the 2012-2013 season. 65% of the incidents were alcohol involved and 70% were speed related.
- ☞ Fifty-five percent of fatal accidents occurred during the hours of darkness.
- ☞ The number of operators arrested for operating a snowmobile while intoxicated was 52 during the 2012-2013 season.
- ☞ The top locations where fatal incidents occurred were trails 40% and lake/streams 30% with 20% occurring on routes / roads .
- ☞ The top cause for the fatal incidents was collision with a fixed object (55%). Driven into open water (25%) was another other top cause.

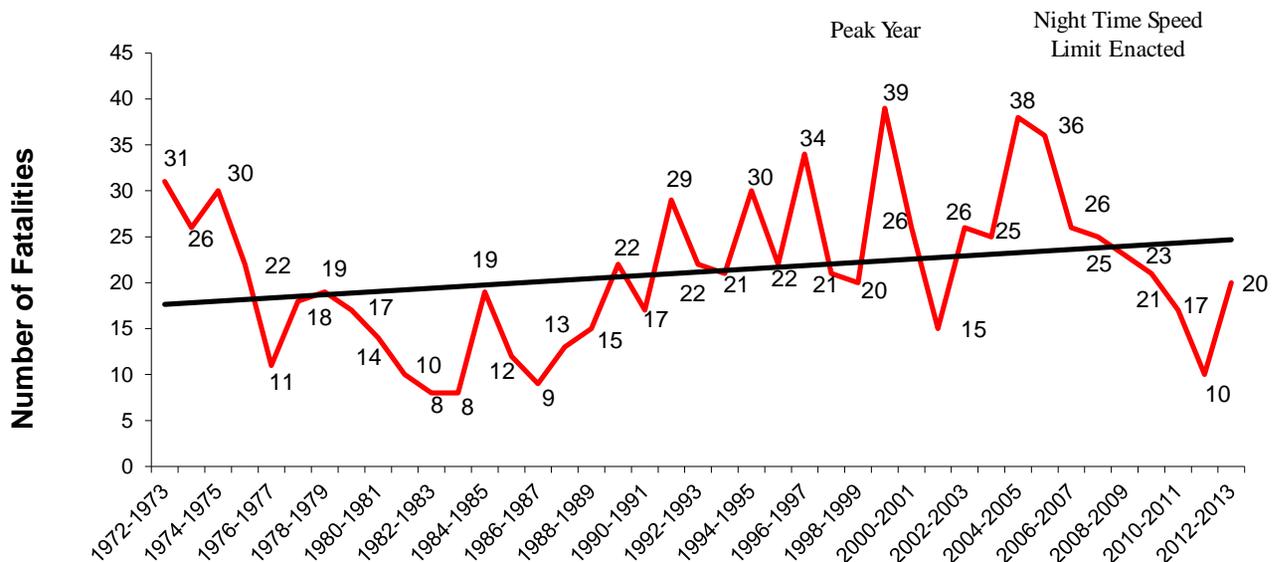
## Snowmobile Safety Tips

The Department recommends the following tips to help ensure safe, enjoyable and ethical snowmobile experience for everyone.

- ☞ Complete a Wisconsin Snowmobile Safety Course. This course helps establish a safety mindset and provides basic knowledge in safe, legal and ethical operation. Visit: <http://.dnr.wi.gov> to find a course near you.
- ☞ When crossing roads, always take your safety into your own hands. Never allow someone to wave you across. Cross only when you have determined it is safe to do so.
- ☞ Use the highest degree of caution while traveling across frozen waterways. Check ice conditions with local law enforcement or bait shops, carry or wear a floatation device, limit travel at night and if you don't know, don't go.
- ☞ Use the buddy system, never ride alone.
- ☞ Don't drink and ride. Alcohol affects a person's reaction time and judgment. Wait until you're done riding for the day before consuming any alcoholic beverages. If not for yourself, do it for your family and friends.
- ☞ Slow down. High speed operation leaves little room for mistakes and greatly increases stopping distances. Many snowmobile fatalities could have been prevented if the operators were only going slower.
- ☞ Nighttime speeds above 40 m.p.h. cause operators to override their headlamps. At this speed, operators have little chance of avoiding a hazard once it is illuminated by their headlamps.
- ☞ When riding in groups, always maintain a safe following distance of 2-3 seconds. Increase your following distance when traveling at night or when experiencing snow dust.
- ☞ Respect private property. The majority of the snowmobile trails in Wisconsin are on private property. Snowmobile clubs invest much time and effort to set up agreements with landowners each year. Riding outside the marked trails on private property is trespass and has caused landowners to close their properties to trails, sometimes forever. Stay within the marked trails and don't cut corners.

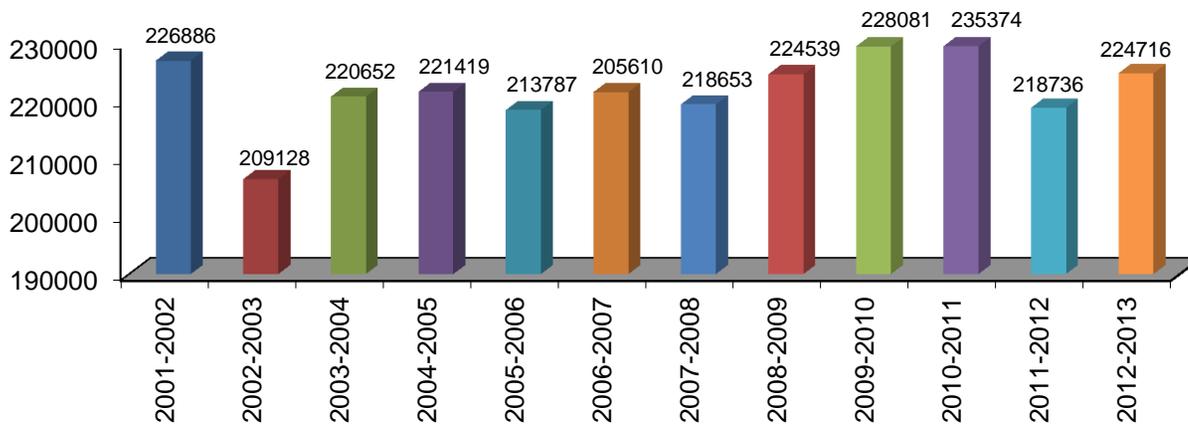
# Historical Data

## History of Snowmobile Fatalities



From 1972 to 2013 we have seen an increasing trend in deaths while operating a snowmobile. However, since the night time speed limit was enacted in 2006 the trend has shown a decrease in accidents and continues to do so. The majority of the victims were wearing helmets and had not taken a DNR Snowmobile Safety Education Course.

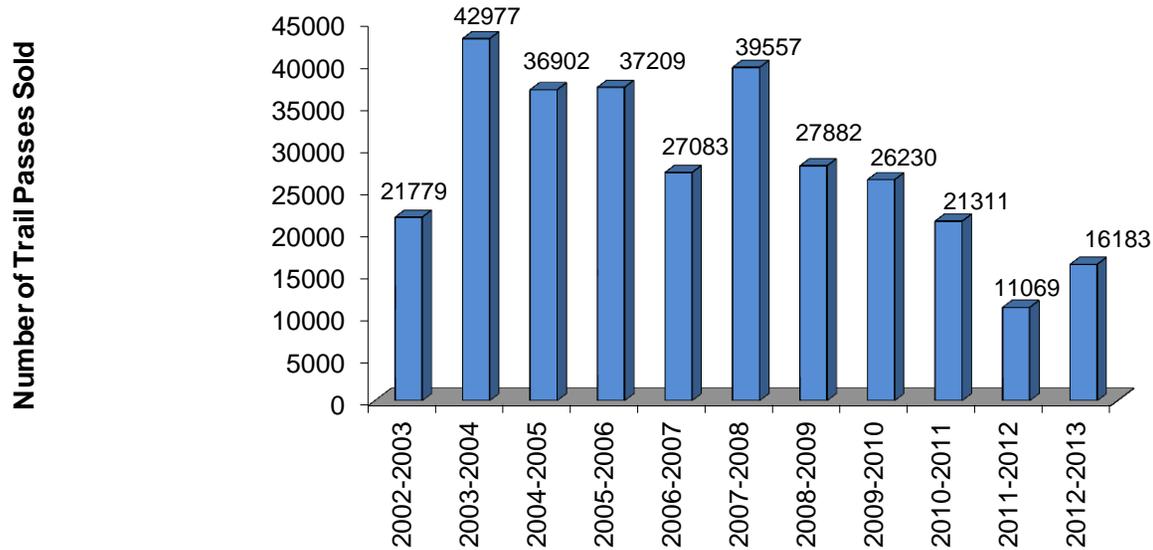
## Number of Registrations



\* Disclaimer: Numbers were updated for previous and current year to reflect the active vehicle counts as of March 1st each year.

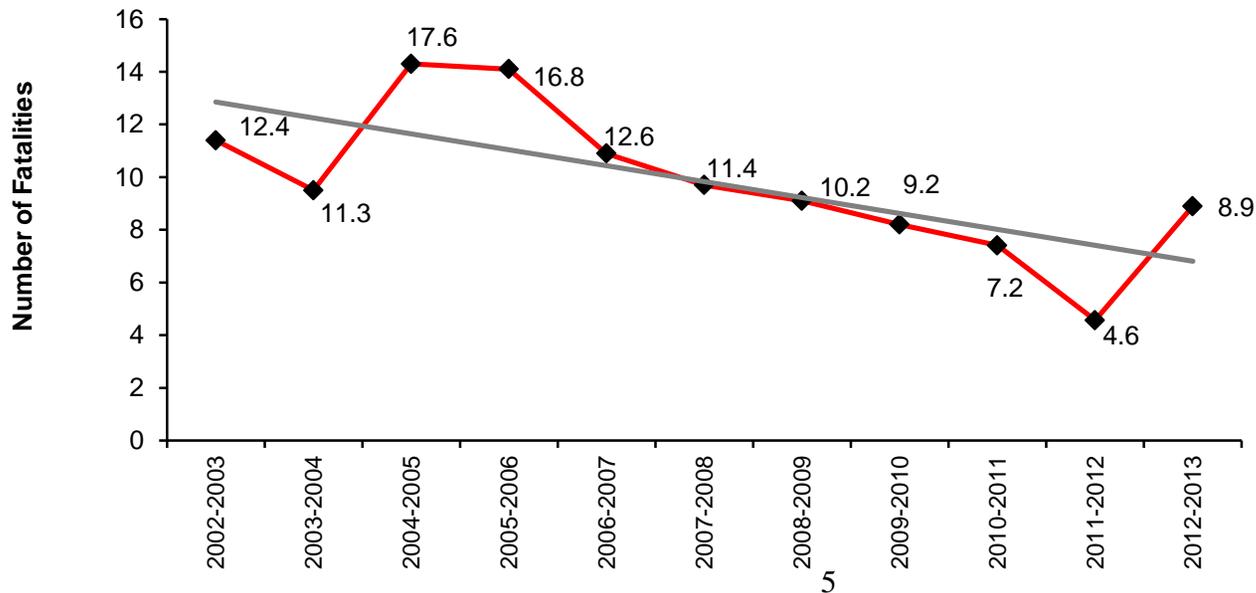
# Historical Data

## History of Number of Snowmobile Trail Passes Sold



In the beginning of the 1999-2000 snowmobile season the law changed requiring non-residential snowmobile trail passes on all out of state snowmobiles that were not registered in Wisconsin.

## History of Fatalities per 100,000 Wisconsin Snowmobile Registrations



Over the past 12 years there has been a slightly decreasing trend in the number of fatalities per 100,000 registered snowmobiles (does not include snowmobile passes). The 2012-2013 season saw an increase in this rate.

# Historical Data: Instructors and Students

## History of Snowmobile Instructors

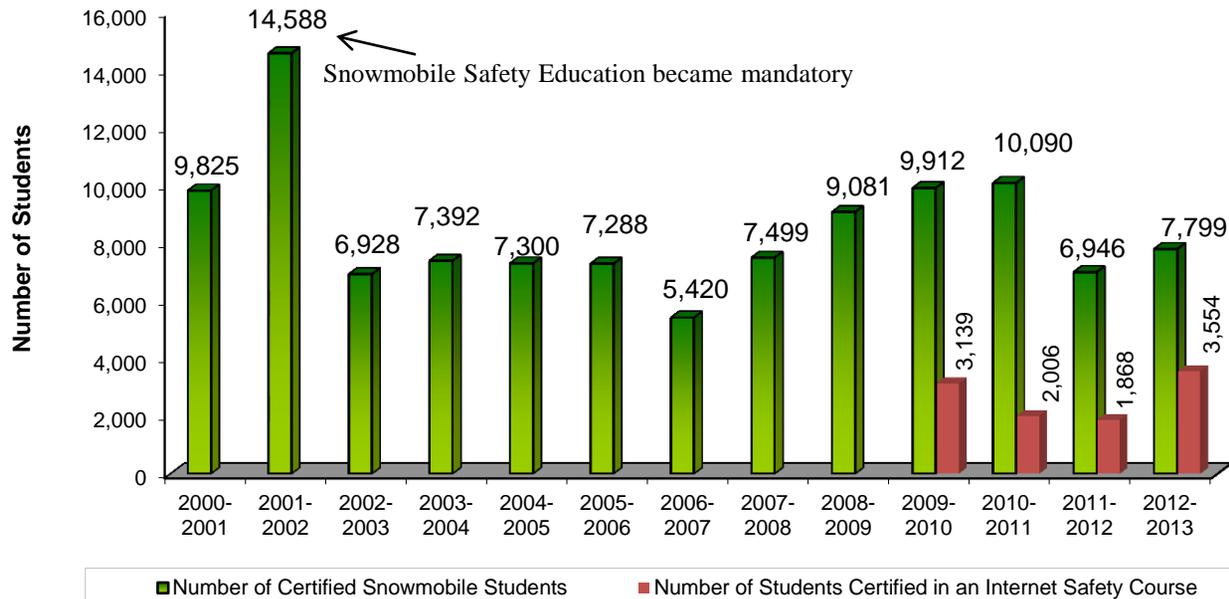


The Snowmobile Safety Education Program began in 1972 and up until 2011 included over 1,000 Active Snowmobile Volunteer Instructors.

The total number of active snowmobile instructors for the 2012-2013 season was 879. The trend shows a decrease in active instructors since 2003.

\* Disclaimer: As of 2011, the WI-DNR Instructor database changed the counting process to only include those instructors who had taught during the last 2 years and are up to date on their recertifications.

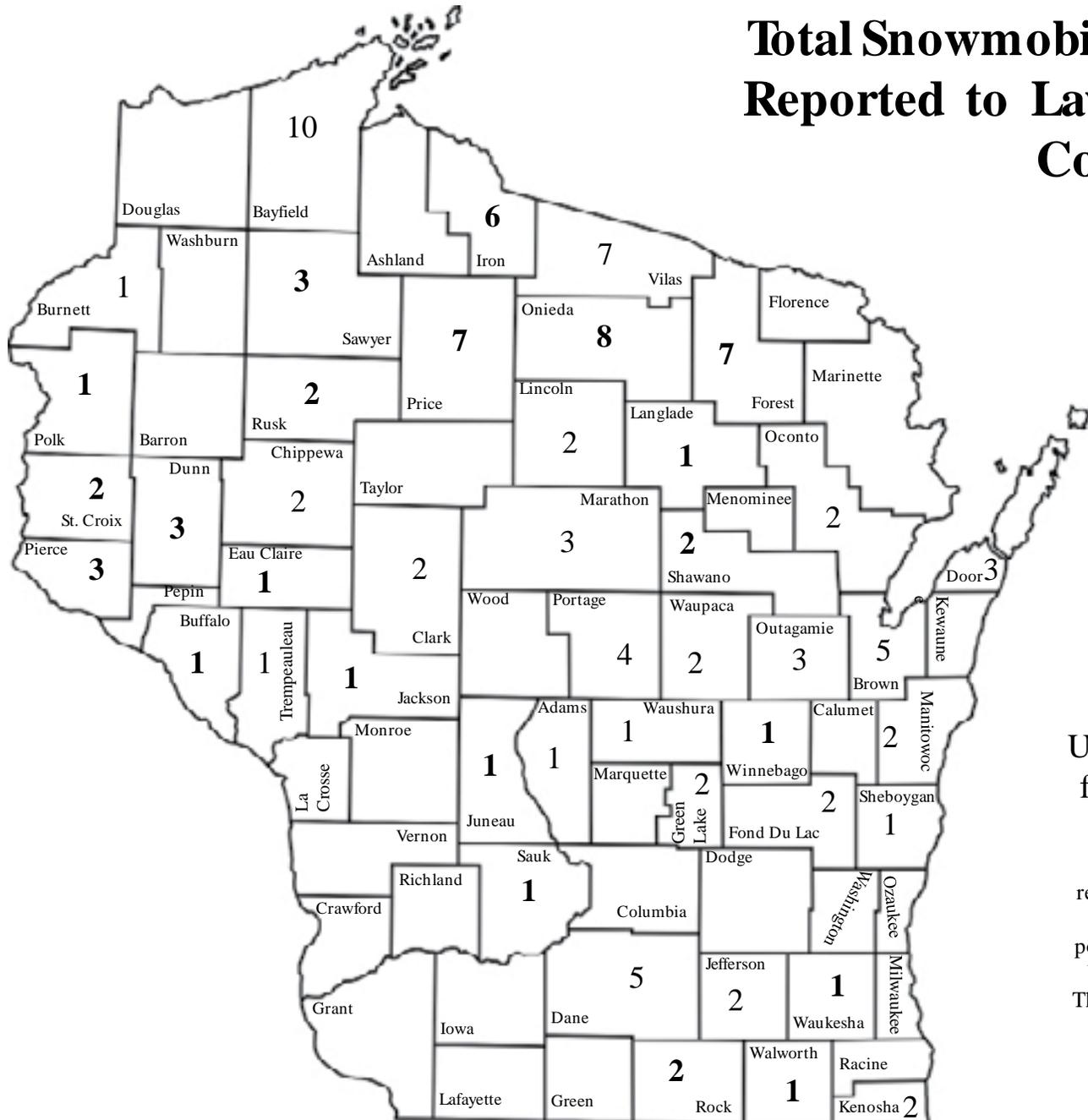
## History of Certified Snowmobile Students



In 1999, the law changed requiring a mandatory snowmobile education certification for operators at least 12 years of age and born after January 1, 1985.

In 2009 the Internet Safety Course became available for customers 16 years and older. In the 2012-2013 season 3,554 of the 7,799 students were certified with an Internet Safety Courses.

# Total Snowmobile Injury Incidents Reported to Law Enforcement by County



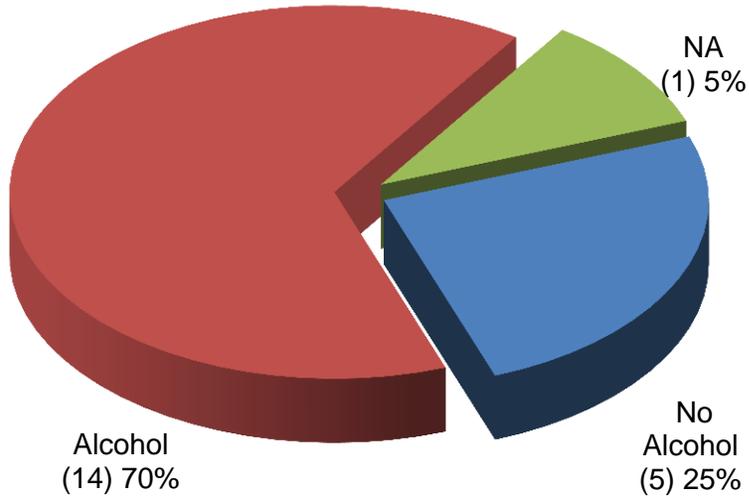
Total Incidents = 142

Unknown County accounts for 22 of the total incidents

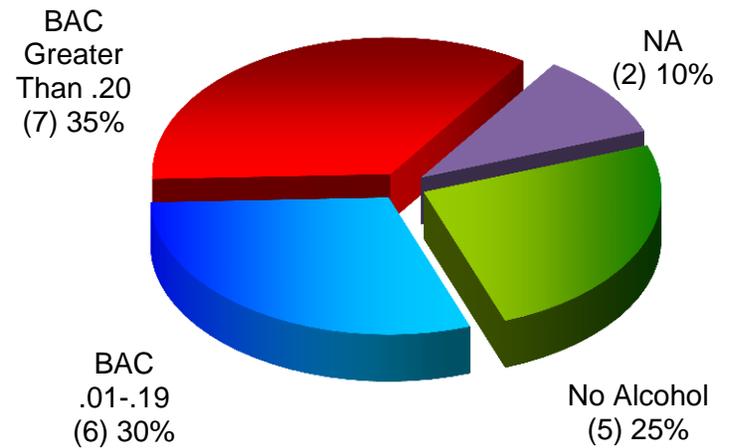
A report must be filed for any crash that results in an injury requiring treatment by a physician or a fatal incident must be reported as soon as possible to a Conservation Warden or other law enforcement officer. The operator must file a written report of the incident within 10 days to the DNR.

# 2012-2013 Fatality Data: Alcohol Involvement

**Alcohol as a Contributing Factor**



**Amount of Alcohol (BAC) Detected in Victim at the Time of the Accident**



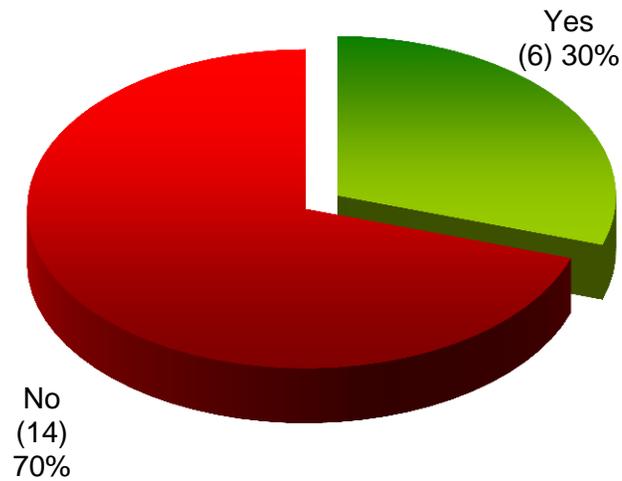
Alcohol Involved Fatal Incidents				
2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
70%	67%	76%	60%	70%

\*All Data is representative of a percentage of the data from the 20 fatal accident victims from 2012-2013.

\*Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is in grams/milliliter (g/ml)

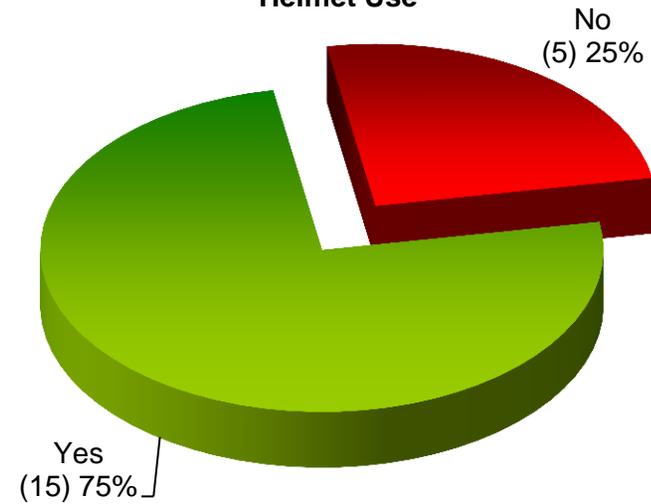
# 2012-2013 Fatality Data

### Operator was Snowmobile Safety Certified



Operators of at least age twelve and born on or after January 1, 1985 are required by law to complete a Wisconsin Snowmobile Safety Certification Course or another state/province equivalent

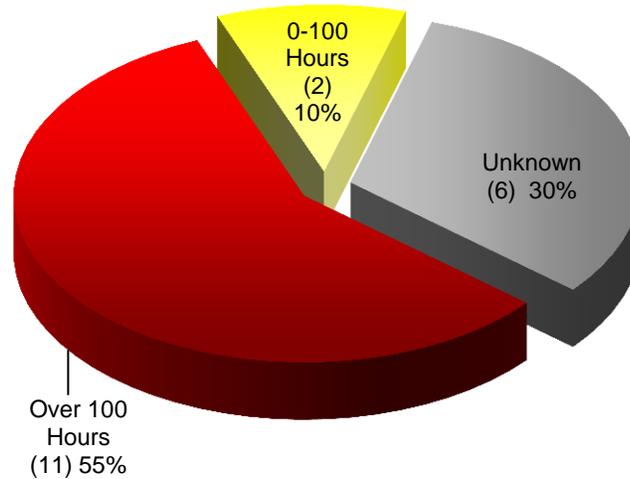
### Helmet Use



Past data shows that, on average, it is more likely that a snowmobile operator that has taken a Snowmobile Safety Course and is wearing a helmet will not be involved in a fatal incident.

# 2012-2013 Fatality Data

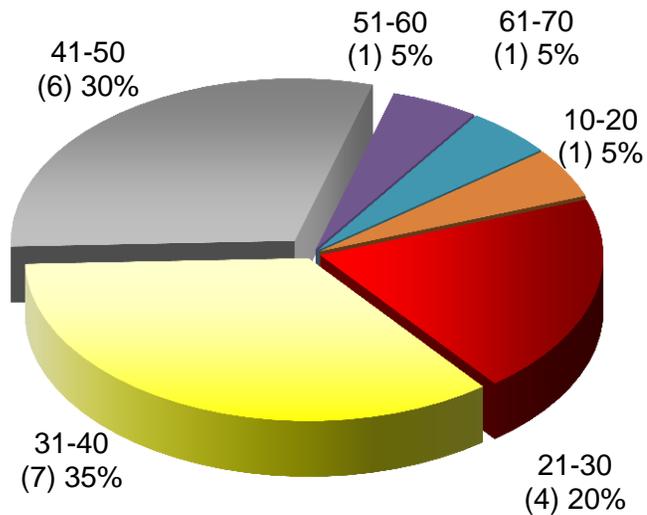
Operator Experience



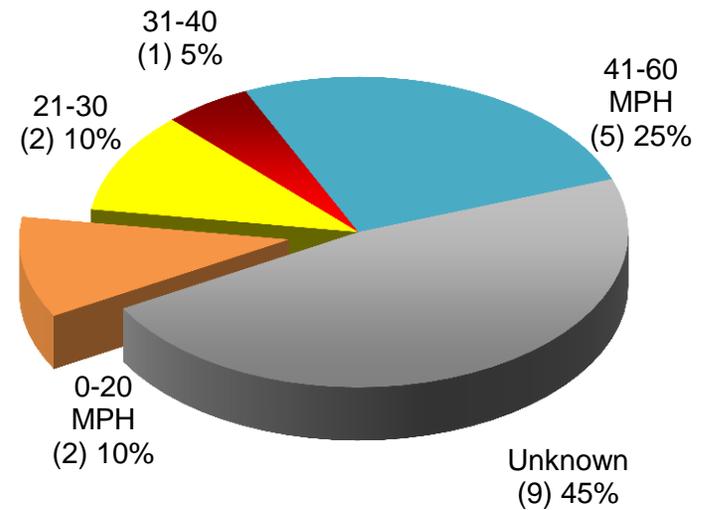
All of the fatalities for the 2012-2013 snowmobile season involved the operator of the vehicle at the time of the incident. There was one fatal passenger incident.

The Average Age of fatality victims in 2012-2013 was 38 years old, with thirty-five percent of the victims being between the ages of 31-40.

Age of Victim

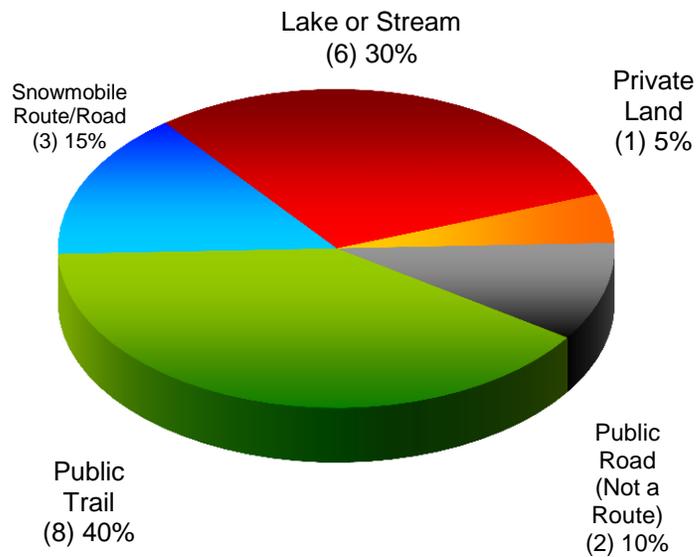


Estimated Speed at Time of Accident

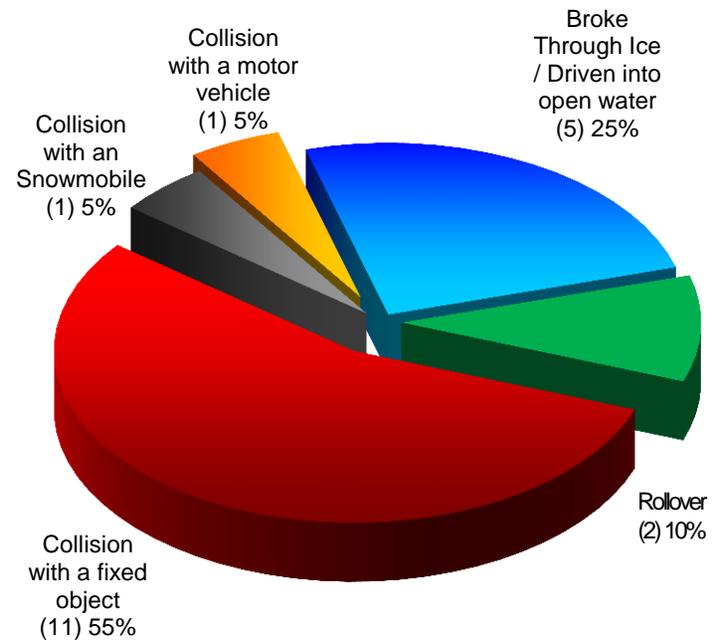


# 2012-2013 Fatality Data

Location of Incident



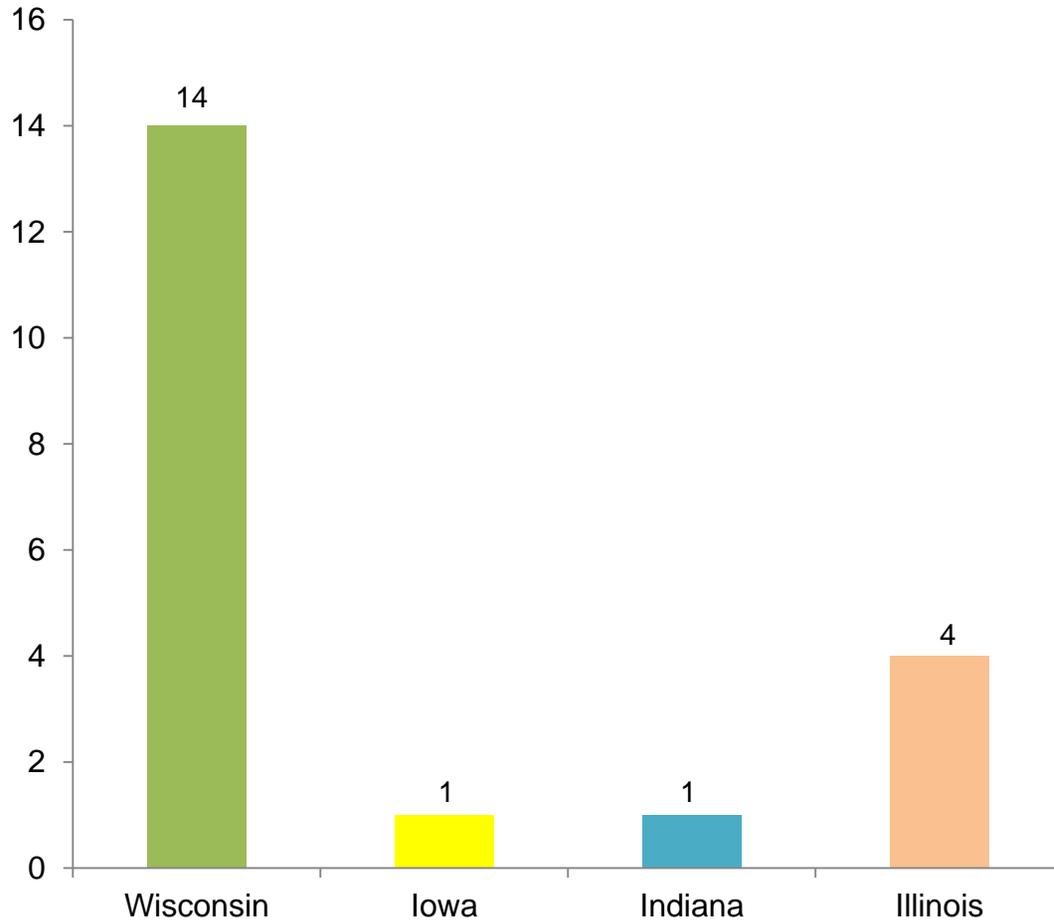
Type of Incident



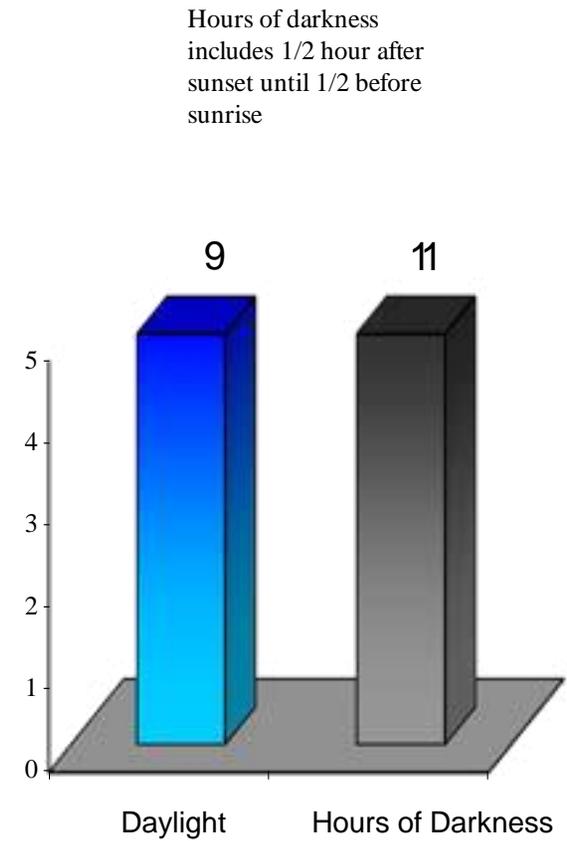
\*A Snowmobile Route is a public road opened to legal snowmobile travel by the local municipality

# 2012-2013 Fatality Data

## State of Residence for Victim

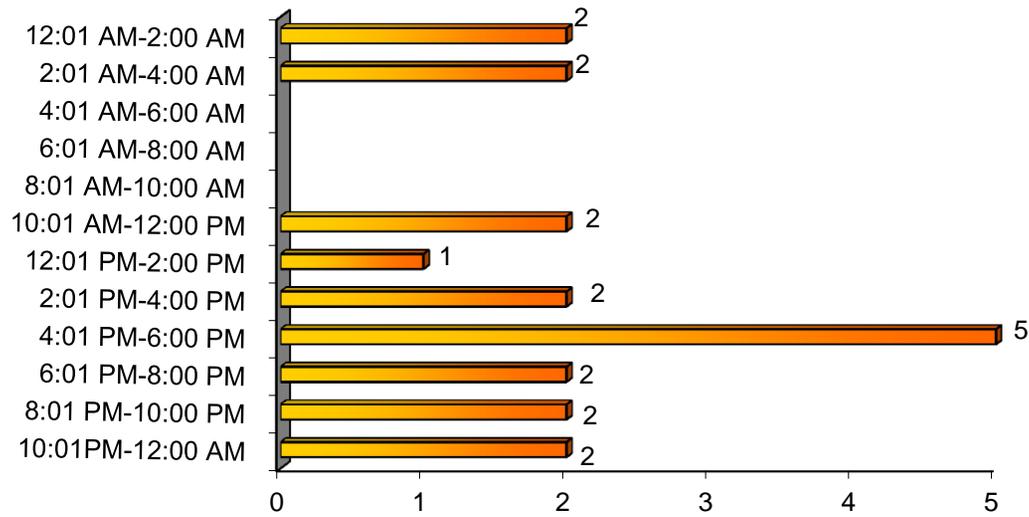


## Occuring After Hours of Darkness

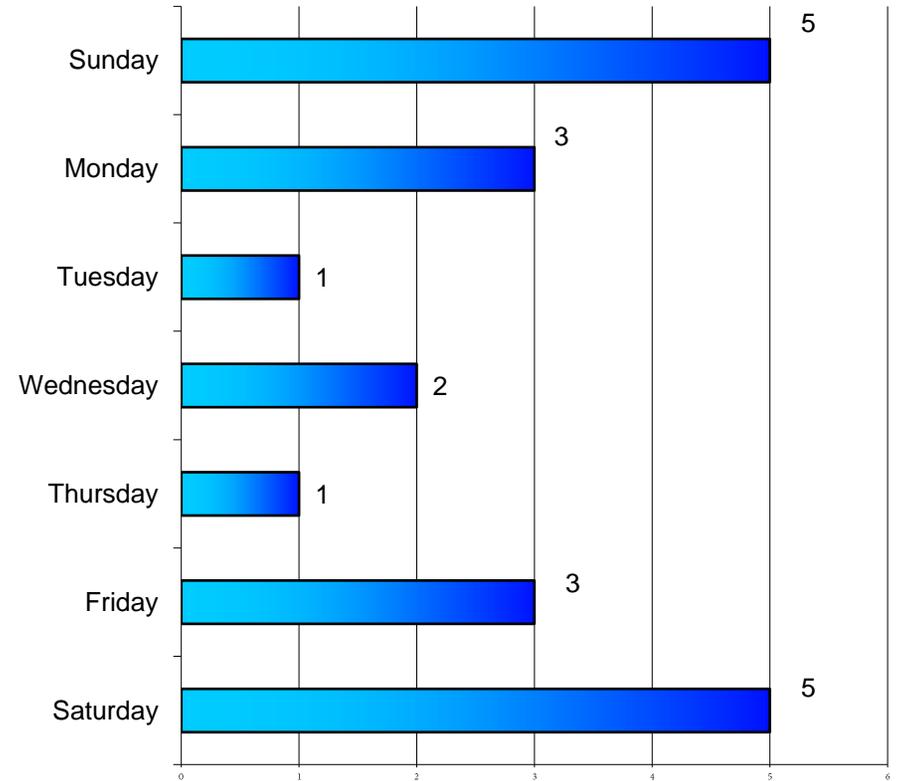


# 2012-2013 Fatality Data

Time of Day



Day of Week



# Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2012-2013

No.#	Date / Time	Location	Type / Cause of Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
1.	12/23/2012 / 4:30PM	Sawyer Co. Chippewa Flowage Frozen Bay	Broke Through Ice	55 / Male	.066 / WI	No / No
<p>After the victim failed to return home from trapping he was reported missing and was found the next day.</p>						
2.	12/27/2012 / 11:18AM	Iron Co. Town of Sherman Road / Route	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed	41 / Male	.000 / IL	No / Yes
<p>Victim was legally riding down a road when he crested a hill and failed to negotiate a curve, striking a dirt pile on the side of the road and then several trees.</p>						
3.	12/30/2012 / 1:00AM	Adams Co. Town of New Chester Road	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol	49 / Male	NA / WI	No / Yes
<p>Victim failed to negotiate a curve and struck a tree.</p>						
4.	12/31/2012 / 7:15PM	Vilas Co. Town of Saint Germain Road / Route	Rolled Snowmobile / Speed / Alcohol	40 / Female	.241 / IL	No / Yes

Victim rounded a sharp curve too close to the edge of a steep drop off and was unable to keep the snowmobile on the trail and rolled into a ravine.

# Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2012-2013

No.#	Date / Time	Location	Type / Cause of Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
5.	01/26/2013 / 12:55PM	Ashland Co. Lake Superior Lake	Broke Through Ice / Unsafe Ice	34 / Male	NA / WI	Yes / No
Victim was operating on the frozen water of Lake Superior when he came upon thin ice and broke through.						
6.	01/28/2013 / 4:24PM	Forest Co. Town of Blackwell Trail	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed	70 / Male	.000 / WI	No / Yes
Victim was traveling on a straight section of the trail when he left the snowmobile trail and struck a tree.						
7.	02/05/2013 / 10:51PM	Walworth Co. Town of Whitewater Private Property	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol / Failure to Yield / Not Wearing a Helmet	37 / Male	.253 / WI	Yes / No
Victim was traveling at a high rate of speed when he left the driveway and struck a tree.						
8.	02/08/2013 / 2:50PM	Bayfield Co. Town of Bell Trail	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol	43 / Male	.132 / IA	No / Yes
Victim was passing another in his group when he hit a dip in the trail and struck a tree.						

# Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2012-2013

No.#	Date / Time	Location	Type / Cause of Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
9.	02/09/2013 / 3:40AM	Forest Co. Town of Nashville Trail	Rolled / Speed / Alcohol	22 / Male	.185 / WI	No / Yes

Victim was traveling alone but it appears that on an uphill angle the subject and snowmobile left the trail and rolled down the side of the hill.

10.	02/09/2013 / 7:35PM	Price Co. Town of Lake Trail	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol	37 / Male	.149 / WI	No / Yes
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Victim was traveling at a high rate of speed which caused him to leave the trail striking trees.

11.	02/15/2013 / 11:45PM	Bayfield Co. Town of Iron River Trail	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol	22 / Male	.284 / WI	Yes / Yes
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Victim was traveling at a high rate of speed which caused him to leave the trail striking trees.

12.	02/18/2013 / 2:15AM	Chippewa Co. City of Cornell Trail	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol / Drugs	38 / Male	.320 / WI	Yes / No
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Struck a bridge post.

# Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2012-2013

No.#	Date / Time	Location	Type / Cause of Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
13.	02/20/2013 / 9:45PM	Ashland Co. Town of LaPointe Lake	Broke Through Thin Ice or Open Water / Alcohol	30 / Male	.286 / WI	No / Yes

Snowmobile operated on Lake Superior after dark between Madeline Island and Bayfield broke through thin ice or open water.

14.	02/20/2013 / 9:45PM	Ashland Co. Town of LaPointe Lake	Broke Through Thin Ice or Open Water / Alcohol	38 / Male	.260 / WI	No / No
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Victim was passenger of #13 (see above).

15.	02/22/2013 / 4:30PM	Door Co. Town of Brussels Road	Struck by Vehicle / Failure to Yield / Operator Inexperience	13 / Male	.000 / WI	Yes / Yes
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Victim was attempting to cross county highway and was struck by a vehicle.

16.	02/24/2013 / 2:50PM	Bayfield Co. Town of Barnes Road / Route	Collision with a Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol	26 / Male	.188 / In	No / Yes
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Victim was traveling at a high rate of speed and was trying to negotiate a curve and lost control.

# Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2012-2013

No.#	Date / Time	Location	Type / Cause of Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
17.	03/02/2013 / 5:02PM	Iron Co. Town of Mercer Trail	Struck by Snowmobile / Speed / Failure to Keep Right / Alcohol	43 / Male	.058 / IL	No / Yes

Victim was traveling south on trail crested a hill and was struck by a snowmobile traveling north on same trail as it crested the same hill.

18.	03/03/2013 / 1:22AM	Rock Co. Town of Milton Lake	Drove into Open Water / Fog / Rider Inexperience	47 / Male	.000 / WI	No / Yes
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Victim was traveling across a lake and became turned around in dense fog and drove into open water.

19.	03/23/2013 / 10:39AM	Oneida Co. Township of Three Lakes Trail	Struck Fixed Object / Inexperience / Speed	31 / Male	.000 / IL	No / Yes
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Victim was riding a rented snowmobile with little experience when he struck a tree.

20.	04/07/2013 / 6:00PM	Vilas Co. Township of Phelps Lake	Struck Fixed Object / Speed / Alcohol	46 / Male	.304 / WI	Yes / Yes
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Victim was traveling toward his residence when he hit two snow banks causing him to go airborne.

# Citations Issued for Snowmobile Violations in 2012-2013

The total number of citations (including warden and sheriff patrols) for 2012-2013 was 991.

Registration / Trail Pass Violations	
Operate snowmobile without valid registration (S-1)	205
Fail to display or improper display of registration decals on snowmobiles (S-2)	27
Operate snowmobile without possession of valid registration certificate or validated application receipt (S-3)	22
Fail to transfer registration of snowmobile (S-4)	18
Give permission to operate snowmobile without valid registration (S-5)	31
Operate snowmobile on snowmobile trail without a trail pass (S-33)	43
Operate snowmobile illegally on or in the vicinity of highways (S-12)	81
Operate at unreasonable, improper speed or in careless manner (S-17)	39
Operate snowmobile on public or private property of another without consent (S-19)	62
Alcohol / Drug Related	
Permit operation by person incapable because of age, physical or mental disability or under the influence (S-15)	21
Operate snowmobile while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substance (S-24)	52
Operate snowmobile with alcohol concentration at or above 0.08% (S-25)	45
Refuse to take intoxicated snowmobile test (S-26)	15
Absolute sobriety underage 19 (S-27)	01
Operate snowmobile with detectable amount of controlled substance in blood 1 <sup>st</sup> (S-39)	01
Speed Related	
Operate snowmobile adjacent to roadway in excess of the applicable roadway speed limit (S-37)	11
Operate snowmobile greater than 55 MPH during hours of darkness (S-55)	11

Equipment Violations	
Equipment violation (S-14)	02
Fail to display lights when required (S-18)	01
Operate snowmobile with engine & exhaust noise in excess of legal decibel level (S-28)	01
Operate, manufacture or sell snowmobile without functioning muffler (S-29)	01
Manufacture or sell new snowmobile that exceeds 78 decibels of total vehicle noise; or modify snowmobile to exceed noise level (S-34)	07
Other Violations	
Drive wild animals with a snowmobile (S-7)	03
Place, possess or transport an uncased or loaded firearm in or on a vehicle (S-8)	05
Shoot firearm or bow in or from snowmobile (S-10)	02
Fail to report snowmobile accident (S-16)	04
Miscellaneous (Snowmobile races, derbies and routes) (S-20)	02
Fail to stop for law enforcement officer (S-22)	03
Remove, damage, or possess snowmobile trail signs and standards (S-32)	05
Fail to comply with regulatory signs (S-35)	149
Operate snowmobile without valid safety certificate or without carrying proof of completion (S-36)	118
Fail to keep to the right and proceed with caution when passing another snowmobile in the opposite direction (S-38)	03

\*These numbers reflect the citations issued and processed through the court system and returned to the Department and entered into the DNR citations database.

## Top Ten Snowmobile Violations

#10	Give permission to operate snowmobile without valid registration	\$199.00
#9	Operate at unreasonable, improper speed or in careless manner	\$200.50
#8	Operate snowmobile on snowmobile trail without a trail pass	\$200.50
#7	Operate snowmobile with alcohol concentration at or above 0.08%	\$641.50
#6	Operate snowmobile while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substance	\$641.50
#5	Operate snowmobile on public or private property of another without consent	\$263.50
#4	Operate snowmobile illegally on or in the vicinity of highways	\$200.50
#3	Operate snowmobile without valid safety certificate or without carrying proof of completion	\$162.70
#2	Fail to comply with regulatory signs	\$175.30
#1	Operate snowmobile without valid registration	\$199.00