

Speed, alcohol, ice, the major causes of snowmobile fatalities

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While local snowmobilers are eagerly waiting for a good dumping of snow so the trails can be groomed and ready for riding, the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs is encouraging its riders to follow all safety protocols when enjoying the sport.

The Ontario Provincial Police have released data that shows many riders continue to disregard the warnings associated with snowmobile fatalities in the province.

Data shows that over the past ten years, driving too fast for the conditions has been a leading cause of OPP investigations into snowmobile deaths.

Alcohol and drugs were a factor in almost half of snowmobile fatalities.

Forty per cent of snowmobile accident deaths occurred on frozen waterways, indicating that travelling across frozen lakes and rivers is inherently unsafe.

“Making every snowmobile ride a safe one starts with avoiding unnecessary risks,” said OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique. “Our fatality data sends a clear message that snowmobilers who speed and drive while impaired by alcohol or drugs, as well as those who dismiss our warnings that no ice is safe ice, are tipping the scales towards a tragic outcome to their ride. The OPP, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs, asks all snowmobilers to make getting home to your family the most important part of every ride.”

International Snowmobile Safety Week is observed from January 15 to 23 and highlights the importance of safe practices when on your sled.

“We want riders to have a safe and enjoyable experience on the trails this winter but also remind riders to ride within their limits, operate with care and control, and to always check the Interactive Trail Guide for up to date trail availability information,” said Ryan Eickmeier, OFSC CEO.

Snowmobile riders are encouraged to follow the safety rules when on the trails. This includes carrying an emergency kit and avoiding waterways. This also means a rider should be ready for the unexpected at all times, especially on trails with other users such as pedestrians or skiers.

Snowmobiling can be a fun and adventurous sport, however there are inherent dangers involved when riding.

Riders need to follow the proper protocols including not operating a machine while under the influence to have a safe and fun season.