

OPP & OFSC kick-off provincial Snowmobile Safety Week

With three Ontario snowmobile deaths already on record (in OPP jurisdiction) so far this season, drinking while snowmobiling was one of the topics at hand as the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) kicked off provincial Snowmobile Safety Week at OPP General Headquarters today.

Following the OPP's investigation, alcohol was found to be involved in all three of the fatal incidents and was the primary cause in two of them. Two of the three victims were not wearing a helmet.

Last season (2013-2014), 21 people died while snowmobiling (in OPP jurisdiction) and the OPP continues to see recurring contributing factors. Alcohol was involved in at least 7 of last season's incidents and speed was found to be the primary cause in 11 of them.

With several weeks left in the 2015 season, the OPP is reminding snowmobilers to take charge of their own safety as this is the only way to eliminate snowmobile fatalities.

Do not ride if you have consumed alcohol or drugs: Snowmobiling under the influence of any amount of alcohol or drugs carries severe penalties. If convicted of snowmobiling while impaired, a rider could lose all driving privileges (car, truck, motorcycle, off-road vehicles and snowmobiles). The same "Warn Range" suspensions issued for having a BAC (Blood Alcohol Concentration) between 0.05 and 0.08 mg. that apply to driving a motor vehicle, also apply to driving a snowmobile.

Take it Easy: Always ride within the speed limit, within your own ability and according to current trail and weather conditions.

Slow Down at Night: Ride cautiously at night and never outrun your sled headlights.

Know Before You Go: No ice travel is ever completely safe. Hypothermia or drowning from riding into open water or falling through the ice are serious risks, as are collisions with fixed objects such as docks, ice huts or shorelines.

See and Be Seen: Good judgment, depth perception and quick reaction time depend on being able to see properly at all times. Slow down and keep right in reduced visibility situations like snow dust, sun glare, heavy falling snow, or when visor or glasses are fogged up; always wear bright colours and reflective materials so others can see you more easily.

Ride with Companions: Never snowmobile alone. Riding buddies can provide immediate assistance for breakdowns, when getting stuck or in emergency situations.

Be Prepared: Snowmobiling incidents occur in unpredictable and uncontrolled natural settings where each rider needs to always expect the unexpected. Snowmobiling can take you far away from emergency assistance, so each rider must be prepared by carrying a tool kit, spare parts, flashlight, first-aid kit and survival items such as high-energy food, fire-starting equipment and a compass.

Snowmobile Safety Week runs from January 17 to 25, 2015.

The OPP is committed to saving lives on Ontario's highways, trails and waterways through the reduction of preventable injury and death. Initiatives are developed and delivered through the Provincial Traffic Safety Program.

The OFSC is committed to proactive leadership in promoting safe, responsible riding, on and off Ontario snowmobile trails, by building safer snowmobiling knowledge, attitudes and behaviours through rider education, safety legislation, development and enforcement.