

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 2011-2012 Snowmobile Enforcement and Safety Report



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Snowmobile Safety Program Employees

Gary Eddy, *ATV/Snowmobile Administrator*
Recreation Enforcement and Education
Bureau of Law Enforcement
Department of Natural Resources

Randall Stark, *Chief Warden*
Bureau of Law Enforcement
Department of Natural Resources

Todd Schaller, *Director of Safety Programs*
Recreation Enforcement and Education
Bureau of Law Enforcement
Department of Natural Resources

Julie Fitzgerald, *Program Associate*
Recreation Enforcement and Education
Bureau of Law Enforcement
Department of Natural Resources

Natasha Fye, *Program Associate*
Recreation Enforcement and Education
Bureau of Law Enforcement
Department of Natural Resources

Introduction

2011-2012 Yearly Summary

The 2011-2012 Snowmobile Program Report was compiled from crash, registration and arrest data collected during Fiscal Year 2012 - July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012. There were a total of 10 fatal snowmobile incidents, a decrease of seven from the previous snowmobile season. 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 seen a steady decrease.

Snowmobile registrations totaled 218,736, a decrease from last year which can be reflected from a number of factors - including the temperate weather and short snow season. There were 6,946 total students certified during the 2011-2012 season. Of those, 5,078 students were certified by 783 active volunteer snowmobile safety instructors and the remaining 1,868 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

- I* Alcohol and speed continue to be the main contributing factors in fatal snowmobile incidents during the 2011-2012 season. 60% of the incidents were alcohol involved and 70% were speed related.
- I* Seventy percent of fatal accidents occurred during the hours of darkness.
- I* The number of operators arrested for operating a snowmobile while intoxicated was 58 during the 2011-2012 season.
- I* The top locations where fatal incidents occurred were trails (30%) and lake/streams (30%). Private land (20%) was another top location.
- I* The top cause for the fatal incidents was collision with a fixed object (60%). Driven into open water (20%) was another other top cause.

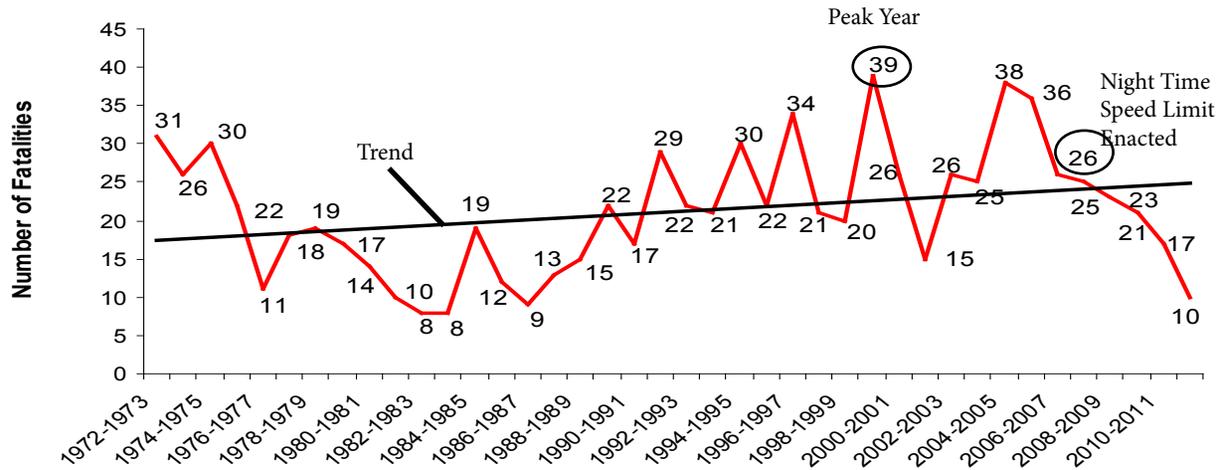
Snowmobile Safety Tips

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

- I* 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.
- I* 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.
- I* 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.
- I* Use the buddy system, never ride alone.
- I* 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.
- I* 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.
- I* 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.
- I* 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.
- I* 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.

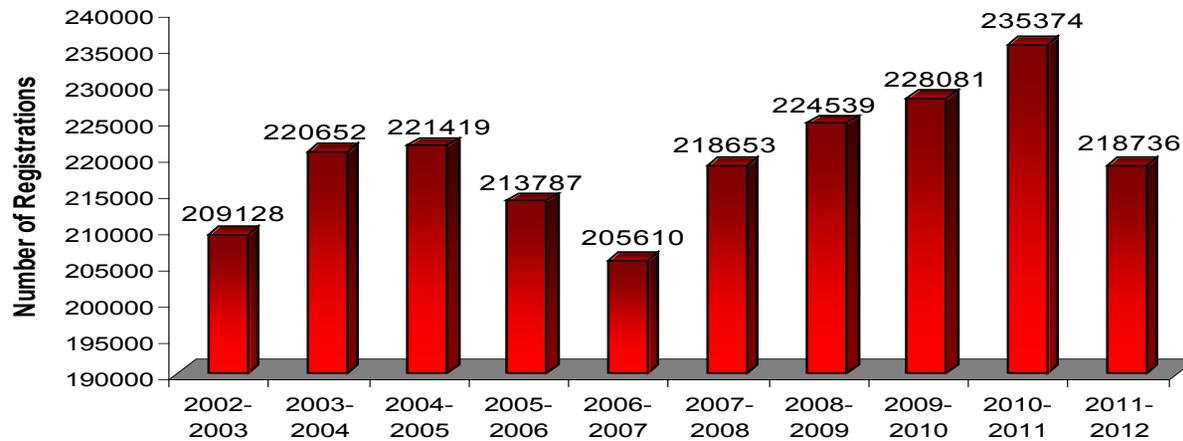
Historical Data

History of Snowmobile Fatalities



From 1972 to 2012 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.

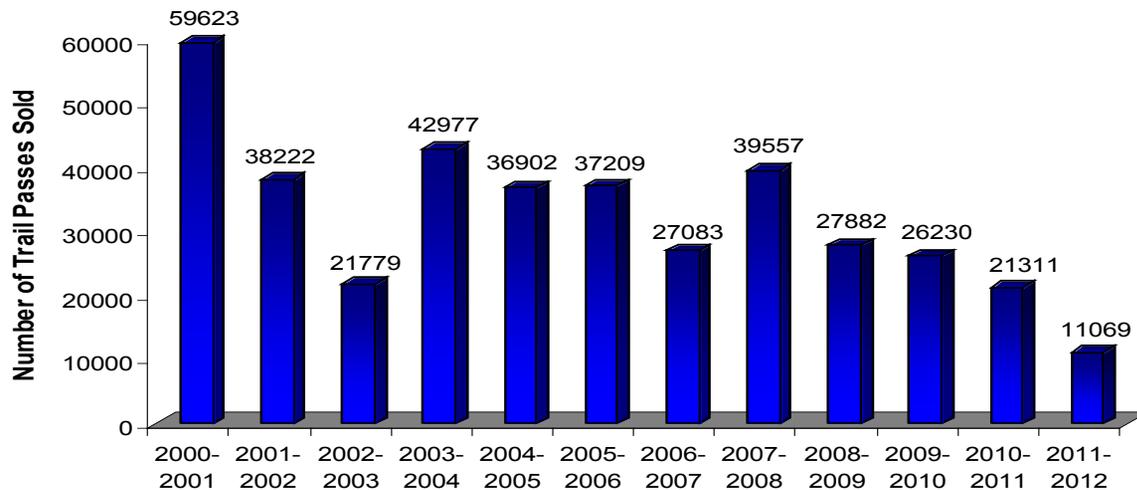
History of Wisconsin Resident Snowmobile Registrations



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

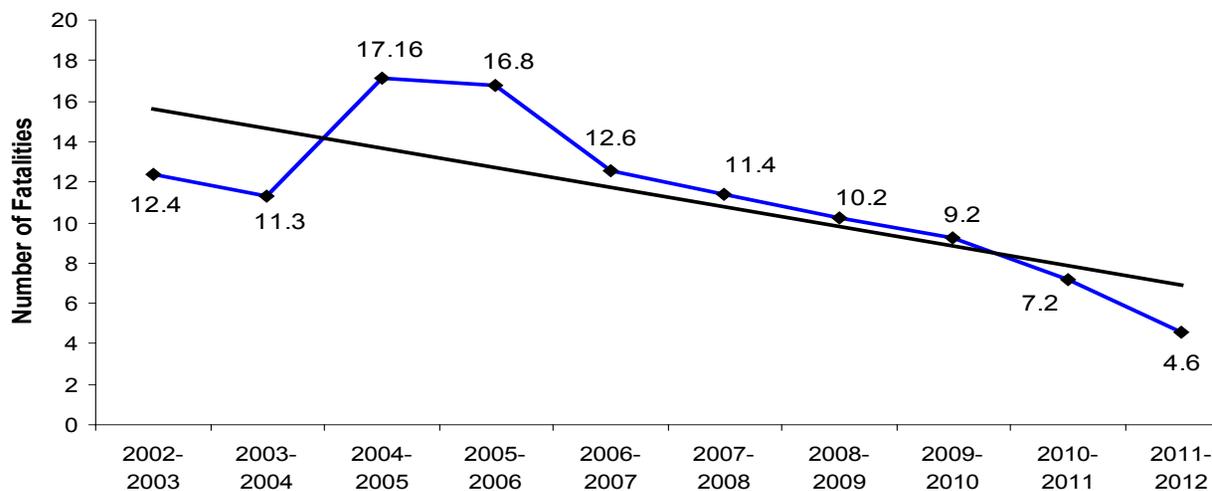
Historical Data

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.

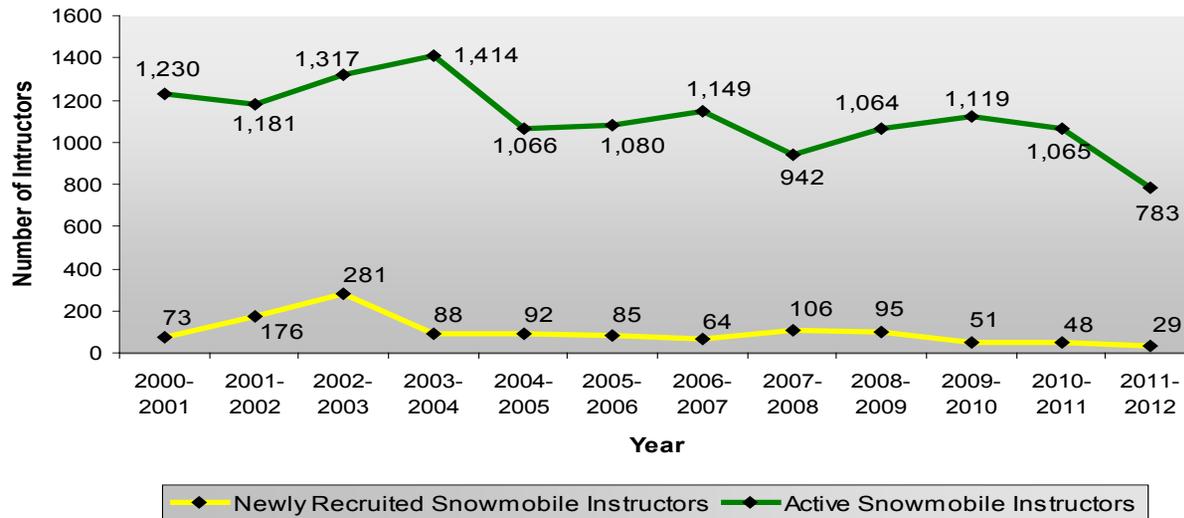
History of Fatalities per 100,000 Wisconsin Snowmobile Registrations



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).

Historical Data: Instructors and Students

History of Snowmobile Instructors

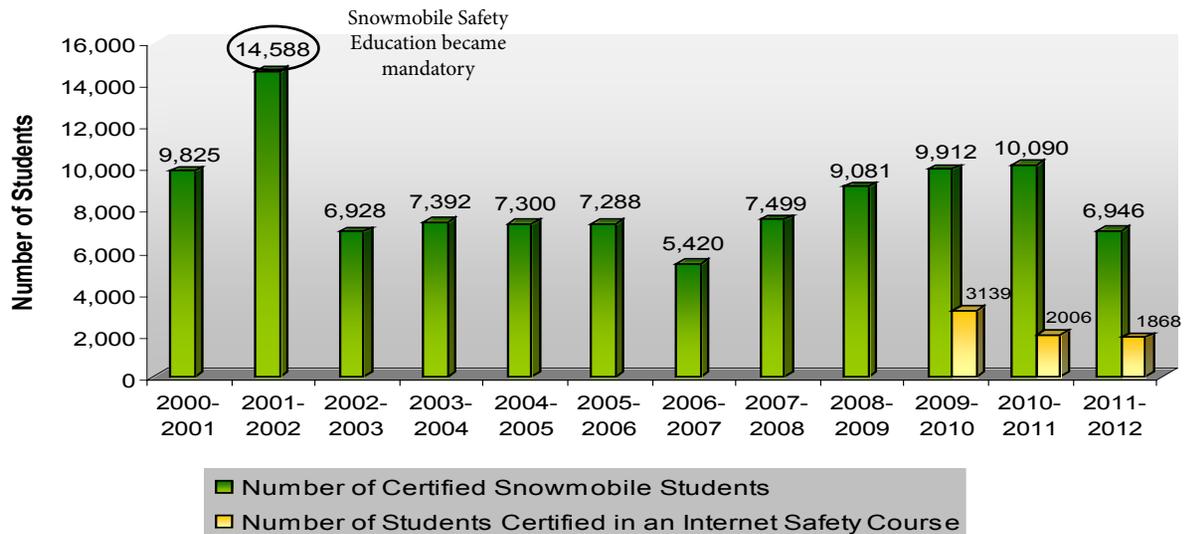


The Snowmobile Safety Education Program began in 1972 and up until 2011 included over 1,000 Active Snowmobile Volunteer Instructors.

The total number of active snowmobile instructors for the 2011-2012 season was 783. 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

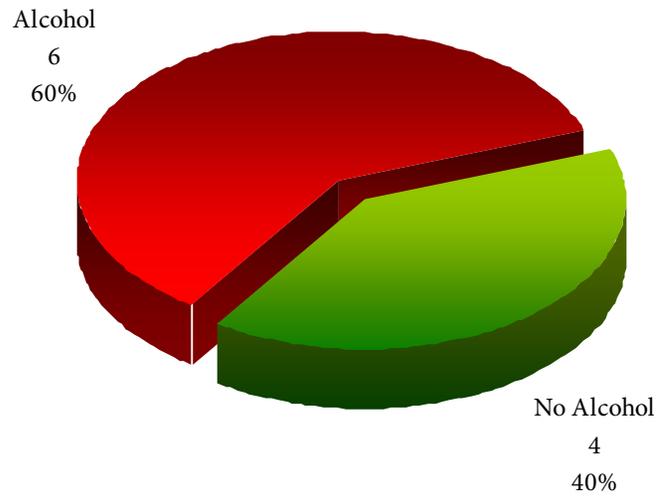


In 1999, the law changed requiring a mandatory snowmobile education certification for operators at least 12 years of age and born after January 1, 1985.

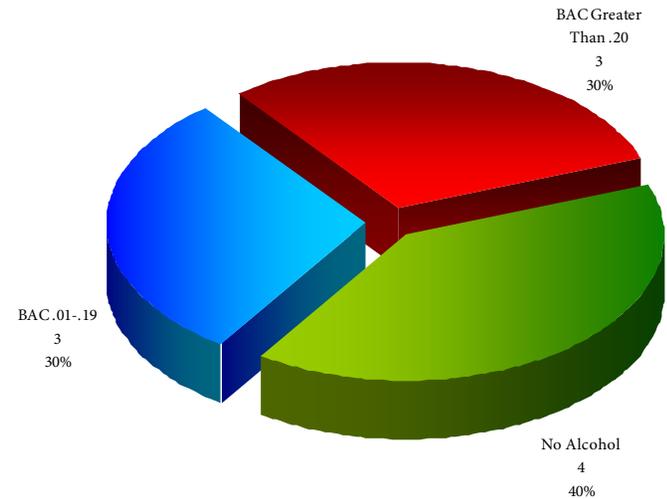
In 2009 the Internet Safety Course became available for customers 16 years and older. In the 2011-2012 season 1868 of the 6,946 students were certified with an Internet Safety Courses.

2011-2012 Fatality Data: Alcohol Involvement

Alcohol as a Contributing Factor



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



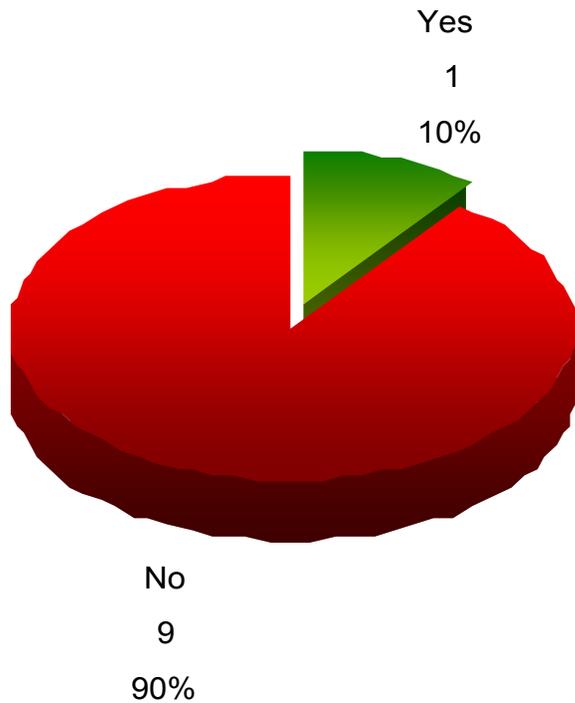
Alcohol Involved Fatal Incidents			
2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
70%	67%	76%	60%

*All Data is representative of a percentage of the data from the 10 fatal accident victims from 2011-2012.

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

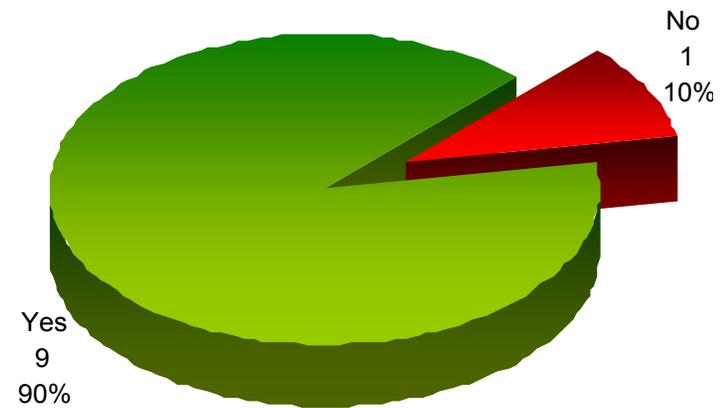
2011-2012 Fatality Data

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

Use of Helmet During Accident (Yes or No)

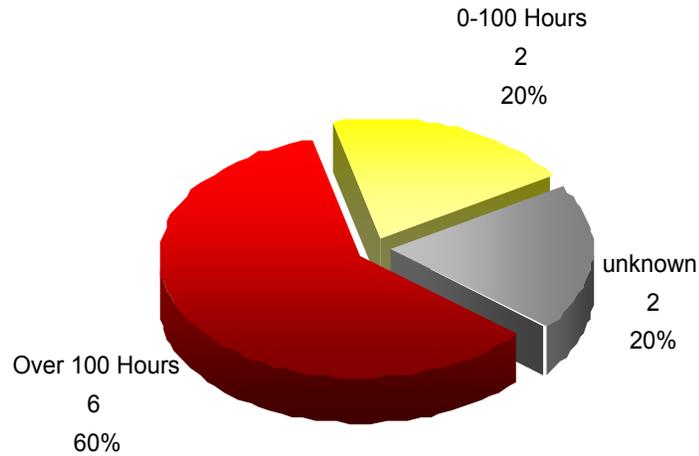


Past data shows that, on average, it is more likely that a snowmobile operator that has taken a Snowmobile Safety Course and is wearing a helmet will not be involved in a fatal incident.

2011-2012 Fatality Data

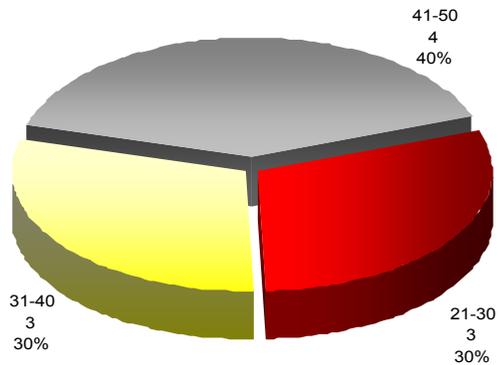
Operator Experience Level

The Average Age of fatality victims in 2011-2012 was 38 years old, with forty percent of the victims being above forty years of age.

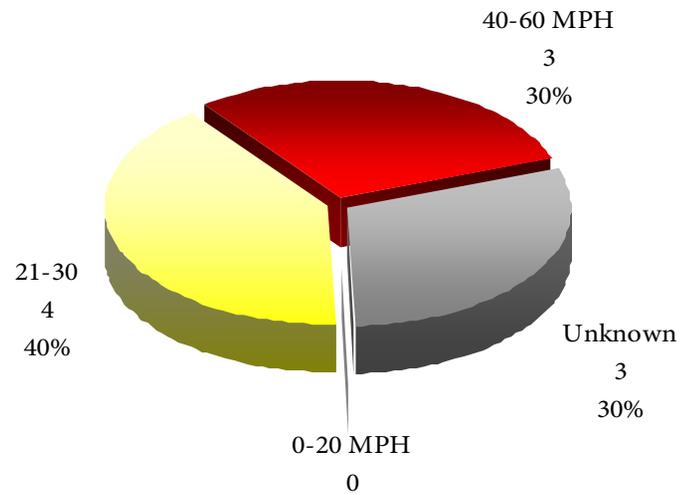


All of the fatalities for the 2011-2012 snowmobile season involved the operator of the vehicle at the time of the incident. There were no fatal passenger incidents.

Age of Victim

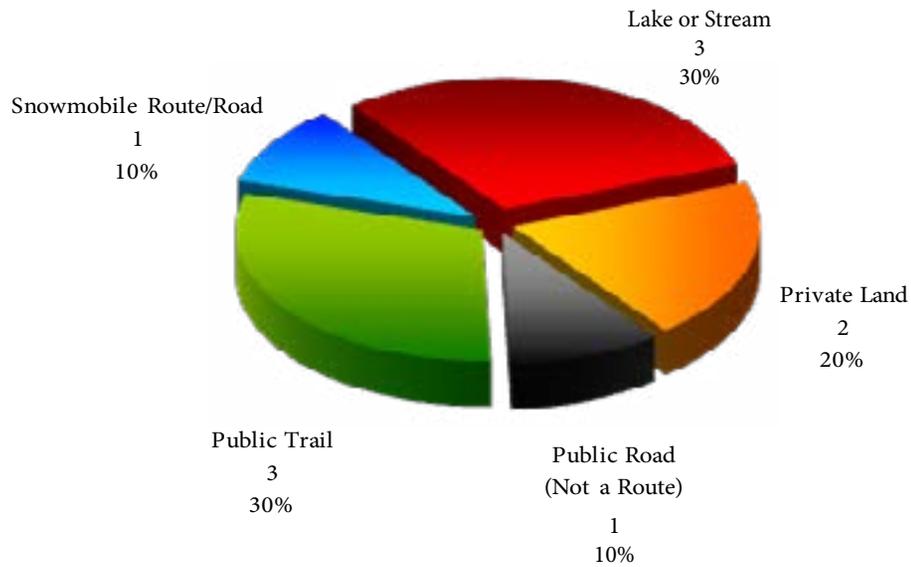


Estimated Speed at Time of Accident

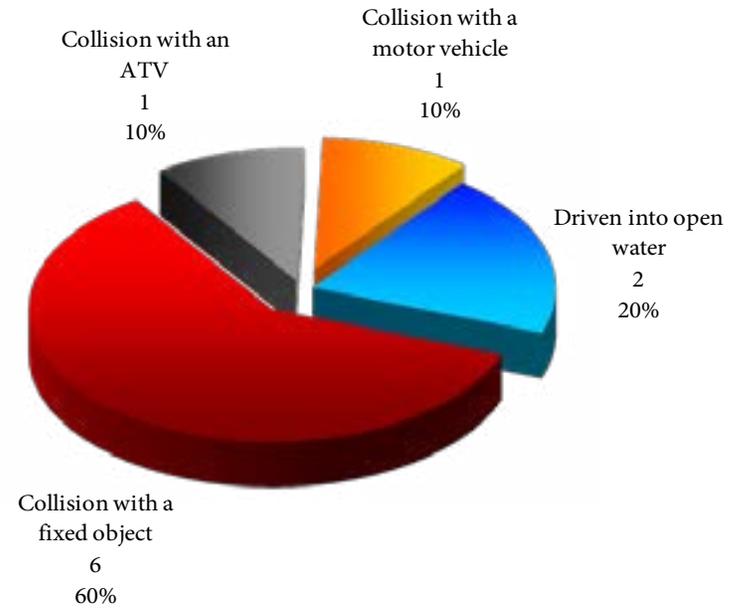


2011-2012 Fatality Data

Location of Incident



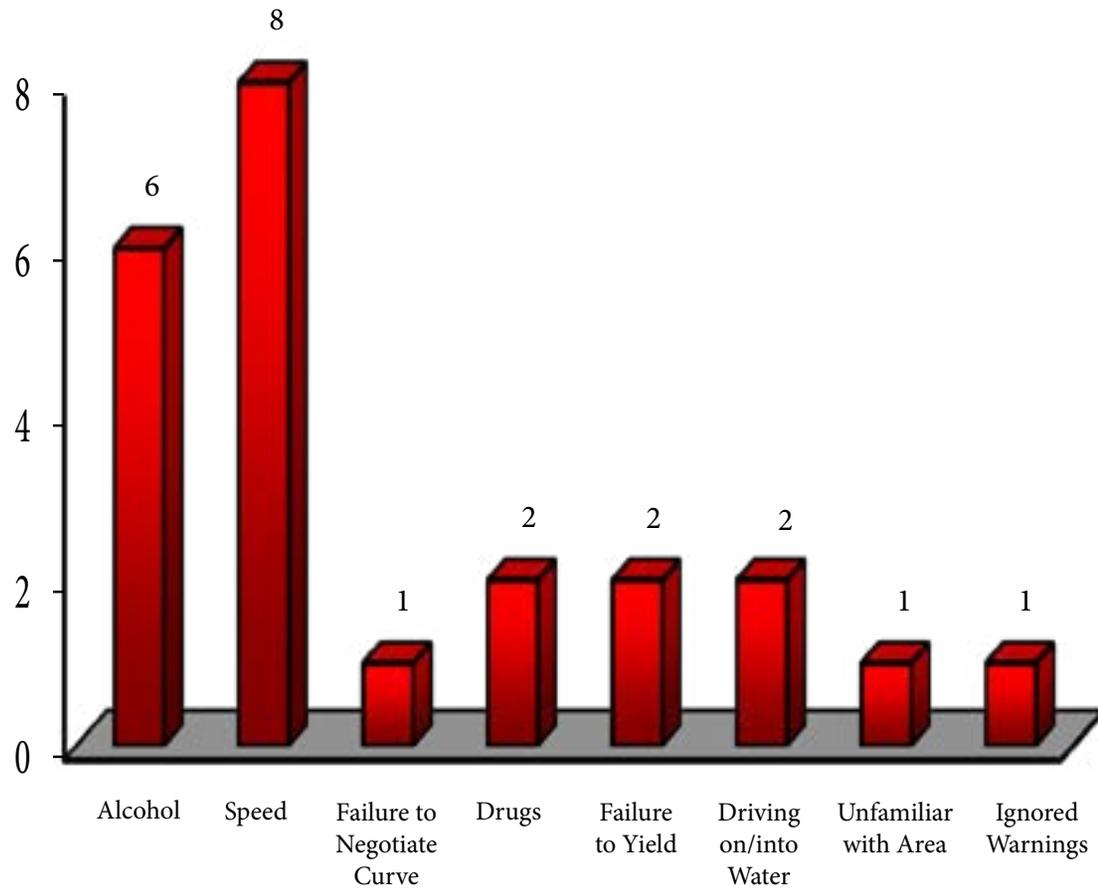
Type of Incident



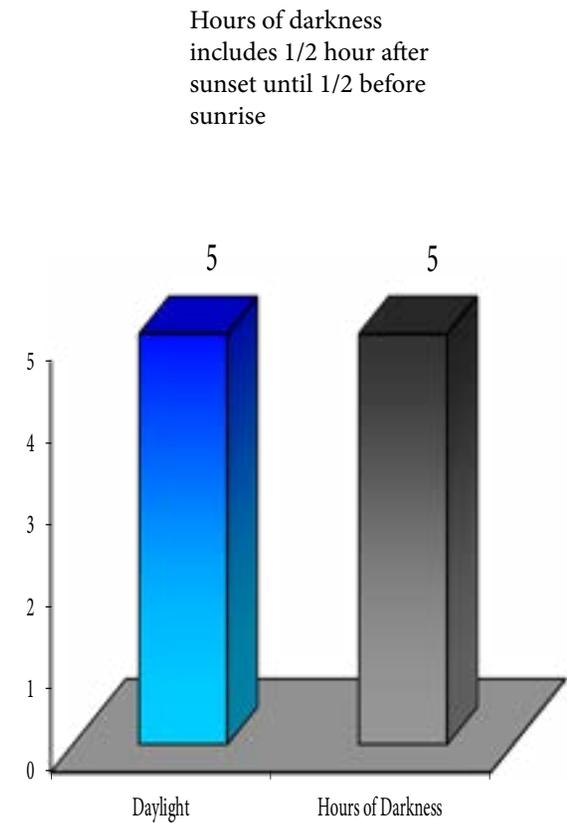
*A Snowmobile Route is a public road opened to legal snowmobile travel by the local municipality

2011-2012 Fatality Data

Factors Contributing to Fatal Snowmobile Accidents

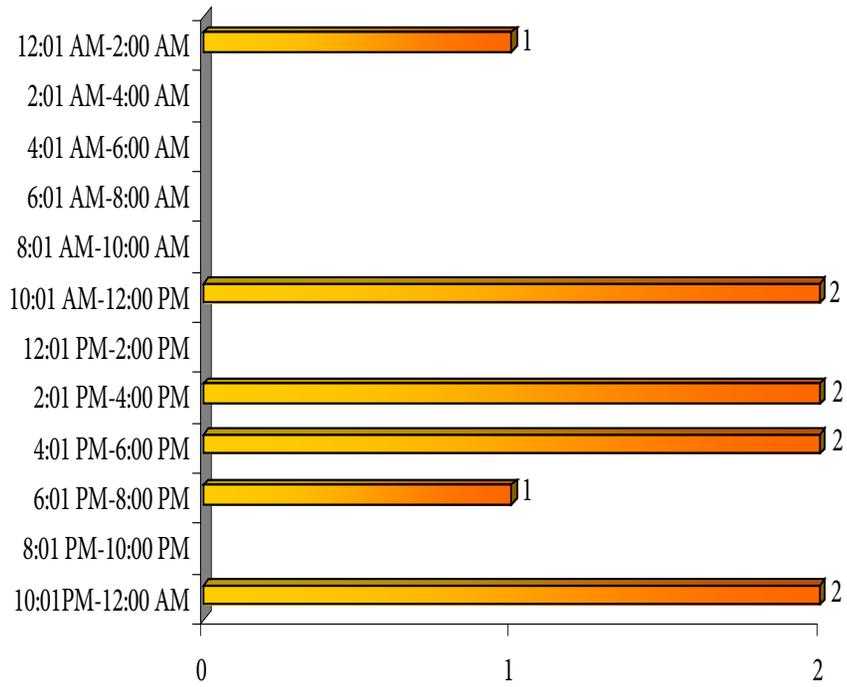


Occuring After Hours of Darkness

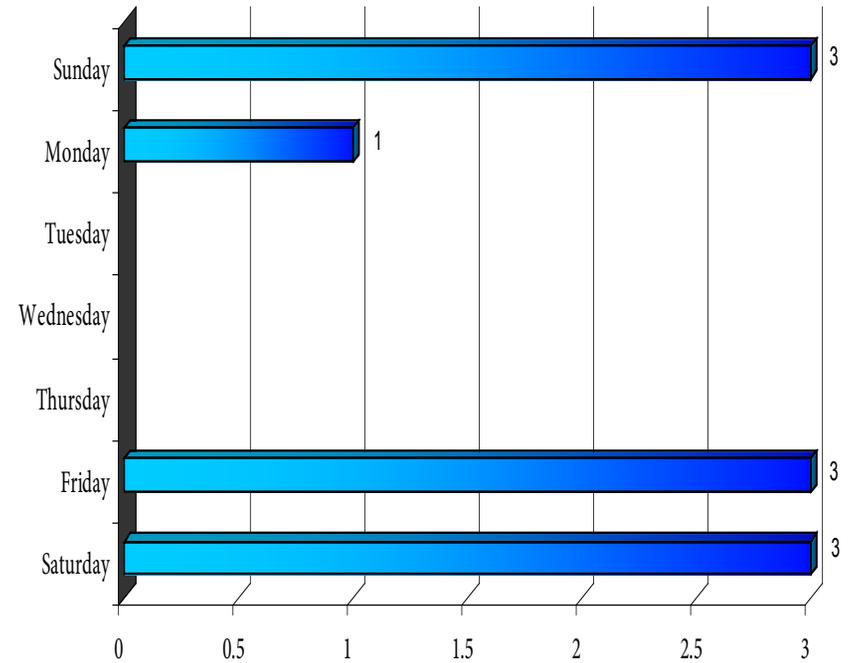


2011-2012 Fatality Data

Time of Day



Day of Week



Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2011-2012

#	Date/Time	Location	Type & Cause of Incident / Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
01	12/26/2011	Town of Thornapple	Drowning	26	NA	Yes
	2:08PM	Rusk County (River)	Waterskiing	M	WI	Yes
The victim tried to waterski crossing open water in between edges of ice. Victim's snowmobile stopped while in the open water and sank. Victim attempted to swim to shore, but could not get back onto the ice.						
02	01/13/2012	Town of Milton	Collision with fixed object	28	.190	No
	3:24PM	Buffalo County (Private Property)	Speed/Alcohol	M	MN	Yes
The victim turned onto a closed snowmobile trail and was traveling at a high rate of speed and hit a cable spanning across the field road.						
03	01/15/2012	Town of Madge	Collision with fixed object	24	.000	No
	4:05PM	Washburn County (Private Property)	Speed	M	WI	No
The victim, with a 6 year old passenger, was crossing a field at a high rate of speed when the operator failed to negotiate a corner traveling through a barbed wire fence and striking a couple of trees. The 6 year old passenger was not wearing a helmet and suffered injuries only.						
04	01/22/2012	City of Fond du Lac	Collision with an ATV	44	.096	No
	5:59PM	Fond du Lac County (River)	Speed/Alcohol/Drugs	M	WI	Yes
The victim on 1 snowmobile and a second snowmobiler were traveling northbound at a high rate of speed on the Fond du Lac River when the victim hit an ATV traveling southbound head on. Investigation pending.						
05	01/28/2012	Town of Hughes	Collision with a fixed object	42	.282	No
	10:18PM	Bayfield County (Road/Route)	Speed/Alcohol	M	MN	Yes
The victim was operating second in line of a group of seven when he overtook the lead snowmobile at a high rate of speed creating a snow dust cloud behind him. The lead in the group did not see the accident but came around the curve and saw the victims snowmobile off the road in the trees and the victim lying in the snow bank.						

Wisconsin Snowmobile Fatality Summary for 2011-2012

#	Date/Time	Location	Type & Cause of Incident / Fatality	Age / Sex	BAC / Residency	WI Safety Certified / Helmet
06	02/18/2012	Town of Upham	Collision with a fixed object	58	.000	No
	10:42AM	Langlade County (Trail)	Speed	F	WI	Yes
The victim was operating second in line of a group of six when she left the snowmobile trail striking multiple trees.						
07	02/18/2012	City of Beaver Dam	Drove into open water	45	.116	No
	6:25PM	Dodge County (Lake)	Unfamiliar with area/Alcohol	M	WI	Yes
The victim was believed to be the 3rd in line of a group of six traveling across the lake when he drove into open water, first two snowmobiles were able to avoid the open water.						
08	02/26/2012	Town of Long Lake	Struck a fixed object	35	.225	No
	11:10PM	Florence County (Trail)	Speed/Alcohol	F	MI	Yes
The victim was operating her snowmobile late in the evening of 2/26 or early morning of 2/27 when she left the trail traveling through numerous sapling trees and was found the next morning.						
09	03/09/2012	Town of Port Wing	Struck a fixed object	37	.224	No
	2:00AM	Bayfield County (Trail)	Speed/Alcohol	M	WI	Yes
The victim was 2nd in line of two snowmobiles, the lead snowmobile stopped and realized the victim was not behind him. Victim was found alongside his snowmobile which had struck some trees.						
10	03/09/2012	City of Hurley	Struck a vehicle	39	NA	No
	10:40AM	Iron County (Road/Route)	Speed/Failure to Yield	M	IL	Yes
The victim was traveling on a marked snowmobile trail in the city of Hurley, ran a stop sign and struck a City of Hurley Plow truck.						

Citations Issued for Snowmobile Violations in 2011-2012

Registration/ Trail Pass Violations	
Operate Snowmobile without valid registration (S-1)	120
Fail to display or improper display of registration decals on snowmobiles (S-2)	12
Operate snowmobile without possession of valid registration certificate or validated application receipt (S-3)	13
Fail to transfer registration of snowmobile (S-4)	12
Give permission to operate snowmobile without valid registration (S-5)	24
Operate snowmobile on snowmobile trail without a trail pass (S-33)	37
Operate snowmobile in prohibited area on state lands (S-11)	4
Operate snowmobile illegally on or in the vicinity of highways (S-12)	58
Operate at unreasonable, improper speed or in careless manner (S-17)	31
Operate snowmobile on public or private property of another without consent (S-19)	28
Alcohol/Drug Related	
Permit operation by person incapable because of age, physical or mental disability or under the influence (S-15)	09
Operate snowmobile while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substance (S-24)	58
Operate snowmobile with alcohol concentration at or above 0.08% (S-25)	37
Refuse to take intoxicated snowmobile test (S-26)	7
Speed Related	
Operate snowmobile adjacent to roadway in excess of the applicable roadway speed limit (S-37)	09
Operate snowmobile greater than 55 MPH during hours of darkness	07

Equipment Violations	
Fail to display lights when required (S-18)	02
Operate snowmobile with engine & exhaust noise in excess of legal decibel level (S-28)	03
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	
Place, possess or transport an uncased or loaded firearm in or on a vehicle (S-8)	05
Fail to report snowmobile accident (S-16)	01
Fail to stop for law enforcement officer (S-22)	05
Local snowmobile ordinance (S-31)	03
Fail to comply with regulatory signs (S-35)	97
Operate snowmobile without valid safety certificate or without carry proof of completion (S-36)	47
Fail to keep to the right and proceed with caution when passing another snowmobile in the opposite direction (S-38)	01

The Total Number of Citations (including warden and sheriff patrols) for 2011-2012 was 637

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