

# OPERATIONS

## Overview

The potential for user conflicts and snowmobiling crashes increases as the number of people enjoying different activities on winter trails increases. Fair and equitable trail management practices that do not compromise safety or the environment should be built into the business to accommodate as many users as possible. This important task requires careful planning and cooperation between interested parties.



This section contains information that can assist a rental/outfitter company manage its operational procedures within the scope of its business interests and the greater community. Various operational procedures are discussed along with the equipment to be used. The overall objective is to safeguard lives, public and private property, the environment, the business's rights, and the rights of other users.

Information is also provided about various governmental requirements that may impact the day-to-day operations of a typical rental business.

When a business tries to 'do it right' and effectively manage its rental operations, it typically increases the business's bottom line, customer satisfaction, community goodwill, as well as credibility with industry, government, other recreationists, and the general public.

# Operations

## **GOVERNMENT BUSINESS REQUIREMENTS:**

There are often certain legal and government requirements that must be followed by most businesses. Consult with municipal, county, state/provincial, and federal government authorities to learn which laws or regulations may govern rental businesses in the area. Insurance providers, accountants, and legal advisors can also be useful resources.

For snowmobile rental/outfitter operators, these considerations may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- ◆ Business or occupational license.
- ◆ Worker's Compensation requirements.
- ◆ Income and retail sales tax.
- ◆ Adequate insurance (*business, property, and personnel*).
- ◆ Employee drug testing.
- ◆ Employee equity and equal opportunity.
- ◆ Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements.

## **GOVERNMENT SAFETY AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS:**

Legitimate consumer rental businesses are those that follow required government safety rules and regulations. Snowmobile rental/outfitter businesses are typically governed by state or provincial law. They may also be governed by federal laws if they operate on federal lands.

### **STATE/PROVINCIAL AUTHORITY**

Requirements, guidelines, and restrictions can vary from one jurisdiction to another. Consideration should be given to the following typical requirements:

- ◆ State/Provincial snowmobile registration.
- ◆ State/Provincial snowmobile trail pass or user fee.
- ◆ Snowmobiling education certification.
- ◆ Operator age restrictions.
- ◆ On-trail renter supervision or guiding.
- ◆ Liability or vehicle insurance.
- ◆ Record keeping.
- ◆ Inappropriate behavior.

- ◆ Hours of operation.
- ◆ Towing restrictions (*sleds, toboggans, tubing, etc.*).
- ◆ Speed limits.
- ◆ Restricted areas.
- ◆ Operation in proximity to other snowmobiles and trail users.
- ◆ Properly functioning equipment: lights, brakes, mufflers, etc.

In the fall of 2004, the International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) surveyed its members about their respective restrictions related to rental snowmobiles. The following list of example rules and restrictions was compiled from their responses. No jurisdiction requires all that are listed. Some are required by law, while others are simply recommendations. Nevertheless, all are worth considering.

## **EXAMPLES OF AREA SPECIFIC RULES AND RESTRICTIONS**

- ◆ Renter/operators must have a valid driver's license.
- ◆ Renter/operators must be at least 18 years of age.
- ◆ Rental snowmobiles must be conspicuously marked with the word RENTAL on both sides of the snowmobile.
- ◆ A government supplied rental safety decal must be on the rental unit where the operator can see it.
- ◆ The rental/outfitter business must provide the renter/operator with a printed map of the area that indicates where rental snowmobiles are allowed to operate.
- ◆ Renter/operators must sign an acknowledgment that educational material prepared by the state, province, or rental company has been read and understood.
- ◆ A qualified guide/outfitter must accompany all rental snowmobiles.
- ◆ A state/provincial certified guide must accompany each party of renters with no more than ten rented snowmobiles per guide.
- ◆ Each operator of a rental snowmobile must watch a safety video, read a basic safety sheet, sign a snowmobile education card, and carry it while operating a rented snowmobile.
- ◆ A renter/operator must sign and carry the rental agreement at all times.
- ◆ The business must maintain a list of names and contact information of all renter/operators.
- ◆ The rental company must maintain a record of rentals for one year that includes the name, address, and age of the renter/operator, along with the snowmobile's make, model, and registration number.

- ◆ The rental/outfitter company must carry a minimum of \$1 million liability insurance.
- ◆ The rental agreement must be carried on the rental unit, as well as be kept on file at the location where it was rented, and contain the rental unit's number and the period of time for which the unit is rented.
- ◆ All renter/operators must complete a 'temporary' snowmobiling safety education course approved by the state or province prior to operating a snowmobile.
- ◆ All renter/operators are required to demonstrate their ability to operate a snowmobile safely prior to leaving the business's rental area.

The above requirements are intended to give a general overview as to what various jurisdictions are considering or have implemented. They are not all-inclusive, nor is every requirement pertinent to all areas. Therefore, it is recommended that snowmobile rental/outfitter companies check with their local regulatory authorities to learn what the applicable regulations and restrictions apply to their area.

## **CONTRACT GUIDELINES FOR SNOWMOBILE RENTAL BUSINESSES**

Some areas have concession contracts or permit programs whereby the rental/outfitter company must comply with minimum standards regarding business rental operations and customer education. This is most often the case for rental and guide businesses operating on federal lands in the United States. This is intended to improve overall safety and responsible behavior, while fostering positive relationships between snowmobile users, local interests, other trail users, and the land manager. As each jurisdiction considers its own rules and regulations, keep in mind that the examples reviewed are just that. They are simply examples and should not to be viewed as standards. Rather, they are an indication of what some agencies have implemented in their respective jurisdictions to manage snowmobile rentals and businesses.

Trail or land managers such as the United States Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, hydro authorities, or State, Provincial, National, or Federal parks typically impose certain regulations and restrictions within their jurisdiction. Snowmobile rental/outfitters must always adhere to all requirements imposed by those land managers when operating on their lands.

The business is often required to show proof of liability insurance, worker's compensation insurance, occupational license, etc. before their contract is accepted. It may also be required to maintain accurate business records and customer rental documents according to accepted enforcement and accounting practices. Easy access to these documents is often required for auditing and compliance purposes during the rental period, as well as for several years following the rental.

State, provincial, and/or federal permit requirements are typically meant to:

- ◆ Ensure rental customers have adequate information concerning the safe and responsible use of a snowmobile.
- ◆ Establish minimum standards for education and instruction.
- ◆ Obtain a customer's signed agreement that they have received the required instruction in accordance with the guidelines set by the regulatory authorities and that they have agreed to comply with safe snowmobiling practices while renting a snowmobile.
- ◆ Promote safe and responsible use of snowmobiles.
- ◆ Reduce the risk of personal injury, property damage, and snowmobile related fatalities.
- ◆ Provide basic qualifications for snowmobile operation prior to issuing permits to operate.

## **IASA RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In addition to what may or may not be required by local, state, provincial, or federal regulations, IASA offers general guidelines and suggestions to snowmobile rental/outfitter companies, land managers, and other interested parties. They are:

- ◆ Snowmobile rental contracts should not be issued to anyone under the age 18.
- ◆ Rental snowmobile operators without prior snowmobiling experience should have a valid motor vehicle operator's license or learner's permit.
- ◆ Provide snowmobiling safety information to all renters/operators who do not have a valid 'permanent' snowmobiling safety education certificate.
- ◆ Staff responsible for customer orientation and training should complete an IASA approved snowmobiling safety education course or state/provincial equivalency exam.

# O p e r a t i o n s

- ◆ Prior to the rental, provide rental customers with information on:
  - Local trail/riding area hazards, deep snow, ice and avalanche conditions as applicable.
  - Map of local trails.
  - Snowmobiling regulations pertinent to the area.
  - Operational characteristics of snowmobiles.
- ◆ Review the common courtesies of operating a snowmobile and potential impacts on wildlife, the environment, and other winter trail users.
- ◆ Snowmobiles should not be operated in a reckless manner, including but not limited to:
  - Operating irresponsibly on a congested trail or in a crowded area.
  - Unsafe passing of another vehicle on the trail.
  - Operating at greater than the posted/recommended speed.
  - Operating too close to houses between sunset and sunrise.
- ◆ It is recommended that snowmobile rental/outfitter companies carry liability insurance of not less than \$1 million dollars.

## **MULTIPLE USE ON WINTER TRAILS**

Many snowmobile rental/outfitter operations must share trails with other recreational users (*cross-country skiers, snowshoers, dog sledgers, etc.*) since they may be located near or within areas with homes, trails, parks, resorts, and other businesses nearby.

Activities of the snowmobile rental/outfitter business often compete for recreational areas and trails. Therefore, it is important that forethought and good management practices are employed by the business to try to minimize use conflicts, incidents, and accidents, while at the same time being sensitive to the natural environment that attracts many snowmobiling customers. As a member of the snowmobile community, the business is responsible to do its best to protect the interests of its neighbors and other users.





Good operational planning and management can help achieve the following:

- ◆ Prevent incidents, crashes, and fatalities.
- ◆ Protect the natural environment.
- ◆ Reduce conflicts of interest.
- ◆ Contribute to the enjoyment of trail systems and riding areas.
- ◆ Protect property and equipment.
- ◆ Reduce future liability and insurance costs due to fewer claims.
- ◆ Build general agreement and goodwill among other trail users.

Rental/outfitter businesses should take a proactive approach in cooperation with the community and other stakeholders to help ensure that all trail users are able to enjoy their chosen activity without causing distress or injury to others. Rental businesses should also work with neighboring businesses and property owners to get their feedback. Local public land managers, private property owners, government snowmobile program administrators, and local snowmobile clubs can help provide professional expertise and input to help the business develop a recreational multi-use plan for the area. Posting a map at the place of business that shows the areas of concern is also a good idea and can help guide renters and other users away from sensitive areas.

## Rental/Outfitter Business Operations

The business should develop a strategic plan to help effectively manage multiple trail use and to enhance safe recreational snowmobiling activities. The trails, trailheads, and rental center building used by the business all play a critical role in the business's daily operations. The following components of the business's day-to-day base of operations should be examined to help create a safer and more consumer friendly environment.

### **SIGNAGE**

Signs that provide safety information and rules and regulations for responsible snowmobile operation should be located in prominent areas (*office, staging area, orientation area, etc.*) and visible to customers.

Signage should clearly indicate all area speed restrictions, designated riding areas, inappropriate behavior, rules of the road, and business policies. The ISMA Safe Rider! poster series is a great way to cover many of these topics.



Signage should also be strategically placed to indicate the location of the nearest emergency telephone, first aid, and public rest rooms. Good signage can perform the following risk management functions:

- ◆ Provide safety and environmental information.
- ◆ Explain local rules, laws, and restrictions.
- ◆ Communicate proper codes of conduct.
- ◆ Provide location specific information, including updates of weather, trail conditions, high risk avalanche areas, etc.
- ◆ Issue warnings and enforcement consequences.
- ◆ Direct customers to first aid stations and emergency telephones.



## SIGN UP AREA

If possible, the customer sign-up and orientation areas should be away from main traffic and staging areas. This separation can help the rental customer focus on instruction and orientation, as well as reading, understanding, and signing release and rental agreement forms.

## RIDER PREPARATION/DRESSING/PRE-RIDE STAGING AREA

The pre-ride area is where customers prepare themselves to ride. It should be separated from the staging area or trailhead in order to help keep these individuals focused on the tasks at hand. For example, in the pre-ride area customers should concentrate on such things as the fit and function of the snowmobile suit and helmet they will be wearing. This is also where riders can choose the right gloves, boots, hat, goggles/face shield, sunglasses, and sun screen to enhance their safety, security, and comfort. The business should be properly equipped with a good selection of safety and personal gear to ensure their customers have a safe and enjoyable snowmobile outing.





## **STAGING AREA**

The staging area is where riders (*operators and passengers*) get to actually touch and explore the snowmobile while they receive pre-ride hands-on instruction and observation. It should be so designated and be clear of all other equipment and activity. Depending upon the location, physically marked lanes may be used to provide snowmobiles with safe access to the trail system. The business should have staff in the staging area at all times to assist, observe, and instruct renter/operators as they embark on their ride. First aid supplies and fire extinguishers, as well as a readily accessible phone for emergencies, should also be on-hand and within the general vicinity of the main staging area.

## **RIDING TRAINING/PRACTICE AREAS**

Ideally, the business should have a designated rider training/practice area where riders can be tested on their snowmobile operation and handling abilities before being sent out on their own, particularly if it is an unguided rental. However, it is also recognized that many rental businesses do not have sufficient property to incorporate a rider training area into their operation. In these cases, the company needs to ensure they give special attention to their other hands-on instructional orientation.

The designated rider training/practice area should be clearly defined with good signage, good visibility, and limited external traffic. In all cases, the business should clearly identify the practice area (*cordoned off from other business activities, trailhead access points, etc.*) to reduce the potential for injury, mishaps, or conflicts with others.

Signing, structures, or physical landmarks like buildings or fence lines can be used to designate an operator practice area. Signs should be strategically placed to mark where rental customers are allowed to ride and to indicate the edge of other designated use areas. Designating the practice area boundaries, can also help staff spot potential incidents before they happen and facilitate speedy reminders and enforcement of rules when rental customers don't conform to the business's policies.

Having renters operate the snowmobile in only one direction, such as counterclockwise for example, is another way to help control the traffic flow, congestion and to better monitor renter's practice activity. A predetermined riding pattern provides additional safety and security within the snowmobile training/practice area, particularly when novice riders are involved.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Renters who flagrantly violate business rules and policies should have their rental agreement terminated immediately. Such persons should be promptly escorted back to the business as part of the rental center's rules enforcement procedures. Allowing misbehaving individuals to stay out on the trail or in the practice area can have a negative impact on other users, the business, and the image of snowmobiles in general. The rental operation will generally gain goodwill and positive reactions from others every time they remove an irresponsible customer from a snowmobile when enforcing their rules and policies,

Keeping winter trails safe and environmentally friendly should be a community effort that all should encourage. One way to ensure customers follow strict enforcement guidelines is to insist on a sizable rental deposit for each piece of equipment rented.

For risk management purposes, and depending upon rental volume, at least one staff member should be assigned in the training/practice area for safety and enforcement purposes. The staff person should be in direct radio contact with the business to facilitate assistance if it is needed. Guides should use hand signals, a bullhorn, or flag to attract the attention of customers and other staff for rider behavior or rules enforcement within the practice area.

Staff can also serve as important eyes and ears for the community. They can quickly report any emergency, event, poor behavior, etc to the business's office or law enforcement if they are in radio or cellular phone contact while they are on the trail. At any given time, they could easily be in the best position to be the first responder to an emergency. If the business's staff is called to assist with an emergency prior to leaving their assigned duty, the business should have a backup plan (*another staff person*) in place to ensure that the business's customers are not at risk. Ensuring the safety of the customers must always be the first priority since the business has a contractual obligation to them. Therefore, critical areas of the business should never be left unattended except in extreme circumstances.

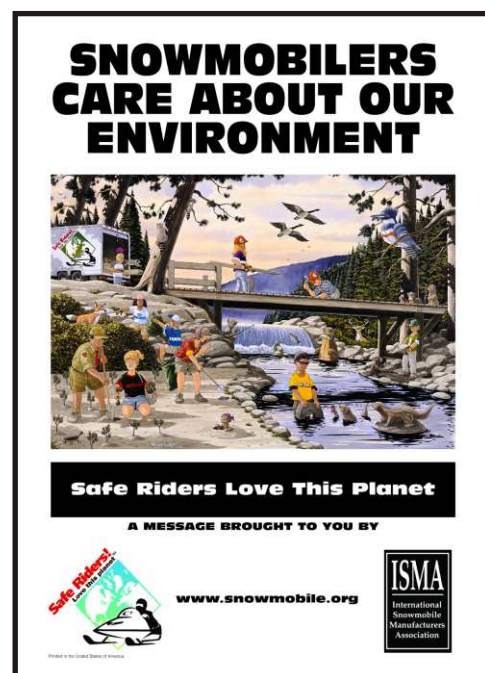
## Environmental Protection

The newest generation of snowmobiles have significantly reduced carbon monoxide and hydrocarbon emissions, so they have far less impact on the environment than older models. Nevertheless, every rental business needs to continue to do its part to protect the natural environment. This commitment is not only good for public relations, but it also makes sense to protect the natural resources that provide the livelihood for rental and outfitter businesses.

Environmental protection is a significant part of many communities' strategic plan to manage multiple uses on winter trails. Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and dog sledding are examples of other winter recreational activities that may be near the snowmobile rental/outfitter business. Respecting the rights of others to enjoy their chosen activity has to be a business priority for several reasons, not the least of which is that these other users may very well form part of the rental business's existing and future customer base.

Rental/outfitter companies should take a consultative approach and work with other user groups to promote environmental sensitivity. Begin by talking with wildlife authorities to establish the types of wildlife that may be found in the area to determine if any species may require special consideration. Regular dialogue with other outdoor users will also help identify any other concerns that may exist.

Incidental information that is gathered should be incorporated into both staff and customer training programs. Rental/outfitter companies should use key points to develop signs and visual displays about how inappropriate snowmobile operation may adversely impact the environment. Highlighting the need for environmental etiquette wherever possible will illustrate the business's commitment to the community and its natural resources. Never presume that customers have sufficient environmental knowledge in advance of their rental experience and observe the following key points when educating all users.



## **SHALLOW STREAM CROSSINGS**

Operating a snowmobile across open water or shallow, unfrozen stream crossings should be avoided. Snowmobiles can stir up the bottom, creating sediment in the water that can affect fish and wildlife, when they are driven through shallow stream crossings. Additionally, fuel or oil could leak from a submerged snowmobile and impact aquatic life. An open water crossing on a snowmobile can be dangerous to the operator and also to those who are potentially called upon to rescue them if there is a mishap. Rental operators should know to use the established trail system since it is typically designed to avoid these areas.

## **VEGETATION**

A layer of snow provides protection for crops such as hay, winter rye or wheat, and small plantation trees. Private landowners typically permit trails through these areas only when there is sufficient snow cover. Rental operators should know that, if the snow cover is marginal, they should avoid bare open areas that may be providing winter ground cover. If operation is necessary, it is important to stay on designated routes to minimize impacts and damage to crops.

## **ANIMALS**

Harassing an animal by chasing or interrupting its feeding or breeding can cause stress or injury and is also illegal. Rental operators should know to ride at reduced speeds near all wildlife and to avoid high population wildlife areas such as winter yard areas. It is both the business's and renter's responsibility to report wildlife hit by a snowmobile or found injured to wildlife authorities. Noise is also a factor that can not only affect humans, but can also affect wildlife.



## ENDANGERED SPECIES

Many species of plants and animals are threatened with extinction due to habitat loss. Federal law protects threatened and endangered species. Rental companies should familiarize themselves with the threatened and endangered species that may be present in their area by consulting with local authorities, and then pass this information along to their customers.



## NOISE POLLUTION

One of the most common complaints about snowmobile use is noise. While the snowmobile industry has made great strides to significantly reduce the sound levels of snowmobiles, complaints persist largely due to irresponsible operators who insist on riding or playing too close to other winter trail users and landowners' houses. Rental companies can minimize the impact of perceived snowmobile noise pollution by doing their best to place as much distance as possible between their business's operations and other users. Businesses should also ensure their equipment has properly maintained and functioning stock exhaust systems. A rental company should never operate snowmobiles that have modified exhaust systems.

## WATER AND AIR POLLUTION

Environmentally conscious rental companies should purchase and use the latest technology snowmobiles to reduce emissions and fuel consumption. Historically, the effect of snowmobile engine exhaust emissions on the environment has been of some concern, while the mishandling of certain pollutants has been another. Rental businesses and their customers should be particularly careful when handling fuel, additives, and oil substances. If spilled, these pollutants can harm microorganisms in the earth and water and endanger the animals that feed on them.

## **REFUELING AND MAINTENANCE PRACTICES**

All those who refuel snowmobiles should know and pay attention to the following:

- ◆ Refuel off the snow and away from runoff water whenever possible.
- ◆ Fill gas tanks slowly and do not overfill them, especially when refueling on the snow.
- ◆ Catch any accidental spills with an absorbent pad and dispose of it properly.
- ◆ Whenever possible, use the most environmentally sensitive oils and cleaners.

## **Facility and Equipment Maintenance**

Facility and equipment maintenance should be conducted regularly to ensure that the business's physical environment is safe for public use. Inspection and regular maintenance should occur, along with timely follow-up action on required repairs and replacements. All maintenance should be logged so that record keeping is established for daily, weekly, end of season, and start of season routines.

Local safety experts, training agencies, snowmobile club members, and insurers can also be consulted to help identify potential hazards in and around the business. Staff can develop safety audit procedures and checklists to further enhance their safety, risk management, and environmental protection measures by working with community based safety professionals and training agencies.

## **Rental Center Audits**

### **PHYSICAL PLANT AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

A well organized rental facility can create a good first impression for customers. It can also help prevent mishaps from occurring which helps reduce the associated risk of liability. Grounds should be kept clean and uncluttered at all times. Daily inspections of access and staging areas, storage facilities, and offices should be routine and performed before, during, and after each shift.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Two-way communications between on-trail guides and the business is essential. A cell phone, satellite phone, or two-way radio can meet communications needs if coverage is available.



## **SNOWMOBILES AND ASSOCIATED RENTAL EQUIPMENT**

The equipment which is rented to a customer can include the snowmobile itself; associated personal equipment like a snowmobile suit, helmet, boots, gloves, and/or avalanche transceivers, and possibly a trailer if it is an off-site rental. The business is responsible to ensure that all in-service rental equipment is checked regularly and is in adequate operational condition for use at all times.

The rental/outfitter business should consider developing a visual identification system for use with all rental equipment. This can better facilitate inventory control, as well as on-trail rental operator monitoring. Highly visible rental identification markings which include a distinctive unit number can allow each unit to be readily identified for visual tracking and enforcement purposes. Like a sign on an automobile that says 'STUDENT DRIVER', brightly colored visual 'RENTAL' markings on a snowmobile can help advise others that the snowmobile's operator is renting and may therefore have limited experience.

While the rental company is ultimately responsible for maintaining all in-service rental equipment in proper working order, there are some aspects of inspection and maintenance that are better performed by a dealer or a certified mechanic.

Snowmobile owner's manuals provide detailed information about periodic inspection, annual maintenance requirements, and what needs to be done including how often and by whom.

## **SNOWMOBILE - DAILY "BEFORE OPERATION" CHECKLIST**

- Make sure fuel tank is full.
- If so equipped, turn the gas lever to the 'on' position.
- Ensure oil injection tank is full on 2-stroke snowmobiles.
- Check throttle and brake cables to ensure they function properly and release completely.
- Check all hoses and tanks for gas, oil, and anti-freeze leaks.
- Make sure hood is tightly shut and fastened.
- If so equipped, ensure battery is completely charged and functional.
- Check suspension, track, steering components, and skis to ensure they function properly and are not frozen or stiff from ice/snow buildup.
- Check intake and air filter for foreign debris.
- Check the drive belt, spare belt, and spare spark plugs.
- Choke the snowmobile as necessary if the engine is cold.

## **SNOWMOBILE - DAILY “AFTER OPERATION” CHECKLIST**

- Refill fuel tank and oil reservoir.
- Remove all snow and ice built up on the snowmobile lights, hood, running boards, and seat, as well as from the undercarriage if possible.
- Replace spare drive belt and/or spare plugs if they were used on trip.

## **TRAILER, TOW VEHICLES, AND THE DRIVER**

Not all snowmobile rental businesses are located on or near the trail system or riding area. Therefore, the safe use and transportation of its rental equipment may be a consideration, depending upon its location and rental focus,

Before allowing renters to transport a rental sled off-site by trailer, ensure they have a valid motor vehicle driver's license and insurance to protect against any loss, property damage, or third party liability. The driver's license numbers, addresses, phone numbers, etc of all vehicle drivers and snowmobile rental operators should be recorded and filed along with all the other rental documentation in their customer file. Collision and third party liability insurance for each trailer should also be a consideration. The business must ensure that its trailer meets state/provincial requirements and it should be covered by either the renter's automobile insurance or the rental business's insurance policy.

Rental center staff are responsible for the routine inspection and maintenance of in-service trailering equipment. They should also ensure that the right equipment is used and that customers know how to transport, load, unload, and secure the rental snowmobile while using a trailer.

## **TRAILERS AND TRANSPORTATION BASIC GUIDELINES**

- ◆ All trailer equipment should be routinely inspected before and after use and maintained in good operating condition: electrical connections, lights that work properly, bearings, tires (*spare*), frame, winch strap, tie downs, safety chains, lug nuts, etc.
- ◆ The trailer must be properly rated for the job: adequate weight capacity, even weight distribution, and even support across the bed of the trailer.
- ◆ The tow vehicle must have the proper size hitch and be able to handle the weight of the trailer, rental unit(s), and associated equipment, as well as the weight of the passengers and contents of the tow vehicle.
- ◆ All trailers must meet state/provincial motor vehicle requirements regarding maximum width, load capacity, lights and equipment, and licensing.

For safety and risk management purposes, staff should always inspect the customer's tow vehicle and any trailering equipment they bring to the business for the transportation of rental snowmobiles.

## EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Staff should regularly inspect and correct equipment problems in accordance with the owner's manual and other manufacturer's recommendations. Always pay particular attention to specific safety warnings highlighted by the manufacturer. *(See page 32, Personnel)* For safety and risk management purposes, an inspection and maintenance log should be kept for each piece of rental and guide equipment used at the business.

Logs should be used to document all inspections and maintenance, including the following items:

- ♦ Daily inspection and routine maintenance of all in-service rental snowmobiles, clothing, and equipment.
- ♦ Daily inspection and routine maintenance of all staff/guide snowmobiles, clothing, and equipment.
- ♦ Routine maintenance and annual major service *(pre-season and post-season)* of all rental center equipment.

## Snowmobile: Advanced, Integrated Technology

Snowmobile manufacturers have been working toward meeting regulations recently imposed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency on the design of their products. Snowmobile/outfitter rental companies are ambassadors for the industry and should keep current with advances in design and technology that affect both the safety of the rider and protection of the environment.

## EMISSIONS

Cleaner engine technology and more fuel efficient snowmobiles are the way of the future. Many current production snowmobile models employ 4-stroke or direct injection 2-stroke technology that significantly lower emissions and fuel and oil consumption. Rental businesses should keep pace as advances continue and use the most current technology in their fleets.



## NOISE

Current snowmobile engines are significantly quieter than earlier models. Rental companies should use the most up-to-date noise reducing snowmobiles available. Less sound provides for more comfort for the rider, and less noise intrusion for other trail users, landowners, and the public at large.

## SPEED

Businesses might consider limiting the maximum speed a rental snowmobile can travel through the use of a governing mechanism particularly for novice or less experienced rental operators. Check with snowmobile dealers for suggestions and solutions. It might also be advisable to consider a business policy that only snowmobiles with a smaller engine size (400 to 600 cc) will be rented to novice operators.



## Administration

One of the least favorite activities for most businesses is the paperwork and the administrative time that goes along with it. A well maintained and properly documented paper trail is essential, not only for managing rental businesses effectively, but also as an important risk management tool.

In the event of an incident, rental/outfitter businesses should be ready, willing, and able to cooperate with law enforcement authorities, rescue personnel, various branches of government, and insurance companies. With little or no notice, the rental company may be asked by these organizations to produce documentation for any number of business or enforcement related inquiries (e.g. *rental contracts, incident/accident reports, business license, personnel qualifications, income tax, retail sales tax, occupational license, safety inspections, worker's compensation documents, employee files, drug testing results, equipment maintenance records, customer orientation documentation, etc.*). A quick, effective, and efficient method of storing and retrieving this sort of information is essential.

## RECORD KEEPING

A combination of hard copy (paper) and electronic (computer) record keeping can be used and may vary depending on the size and location of the business. The business owner has a responsibility to keep records of all activities and transactions involving the rental operations and customer education. Keeping track of all transactions requires a detailed and organized filing system which may include the following:

### BUSINESS FILES

- ◆ Business license or registration.
- ◆ Worker's Compensation information and coverage.
- ◆ Miscellaneous government regulations.
- ◆ Insurance policies, coverage, and claims.
- ◆ Accounting and tax information.

### EMPLOYEE FILES

- ◆ Applications for employment.
- ◆ Training documentation.
- ◆ Staff profiles: training qualifications.
- ◆ Staff re-certification requirements.

### FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE FILES

- ◆ Inspection and maintenance logs.
- ◆ Repair or replacement documentation.
- ◆ Owner's manuals.
- ◆ Shop manuals.
- ◆ Equipment warranties.
- ◆ Safety audits.
- ◆ Grounds and equipment checklists.



## ENFORCEMENT AND INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORTING FILES

- ◆ Incident/accident reports. *(These may be difficult to obtain from law enforcement agencies, but if the company's rental unit was involved, the company should pursue obtaining a report even if it requires filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) claim which may take 6 months or longer)*
- ◆ Customer case files.
- ◆ Rules, regulations, and laws.
- ◆ Enforcement policies.



## CUSTOMER FILES

- ◆ Education and orientation documentation.
- ◆ Signed rental agreements.
- ◆ Signed waivers and release forms.
- ◆ Permanent snowmobiling safety education certification *(if pertinent to area or jurisdiction)*.
- ◆ Temporary snowmobiling safety education certification *(if pertinent to area or jurisdiction)*.

All business records should be archived and filed for easy retrieval in case they are ever needed. Retain copies of all government regulations that affect the business and update them as new ones are issued. Incident reports and equipment maintenance logs should be kept indefinitely for risk management purposes. Employee records should be kept at least five years or according to the area's statute of limitations. For risk management and insurance purposes, documentation should be thorough and copies of records should be retained of all staff and customer training, rental agreements, waivers, etc. for an indefinite period, or until the statute of limitations has expired for potential lawsuits related to accidents or incidents.