

# CUSTOMER ORIENTATION AND EDUCATION

## Overview

Proper instruction and superior customer service can go a long way toward ensuring that customers enjoy their snowmobile rental or outfitter experience. Proper training, instruction, and attention to detail can help enable a customer to handle the snowmobile in a safe and responsible manner. The Personnel Section in Chapter 1 highlights the education and training needed to develop snowmobile proficient rental agency and guide staff - people knowledgeable about safe and responsible snowmobiling. This education and orientation should also be passed along to all customers.

Many people come to rent a snowmobile with little or no snowmobiling experience, while others may have operated a snowmobile previously. Some have passed a state/provincial approved snowmobile safety education course, while others have not. Some will come to operate a snowmobile, while others will come to ride as passengers. Business personnel must determine the rental customer's experience level and intent on an individual basis, and then decide what level of orientation is needed for the particular activity in that local area.

This section will help the rental/outfitter company meet those challenges. It offers suggestions on how to develop safety education and hands-on orientation programs for all snowmobile rental customers (*operator and passengers*) regardless of their experience level.

## Customer Orientation and Education

### **ASSESSING THE CUSTOMER'S ABILITY TO OPERATE A SNOWMOBILE**

Staff should first determine how much snowmobile handling experience a customer has and their familiarity level with safe snowmobiling practices, in order to provide adequate orientation to a wide range of people. For safety and risk management purposes, the business should also determine if they (*operators and passengers*) have any medical or physical conditions that could adversely affect their safety and/or the safe operation of a snowmobile. (See page 79, *Risk Management*)

A written 'Application to Rent' a snowmobile can help determine the following:

- ◆ General snowmobiling knowledge and experience.
- ◆ Snowmobile safety courses and certifications.
- ◆ Relevant medical, physical, or stress management considerations.

Proper attention to customer detail in the Application to Rent can provide valuable orientation information, as well as important protection for the business, especially if there should be a problem with the rental experience. Self-disclosure also provides the customer an opportunity to discretely inform the business of any physical or emotional challenges relevant to the activity.

### **INSTRUCTION, EDUCATION, AND OPERATOR ORIENTATION**

Most snowmobilers, whether experienced or not, can benefit from a review of the rules of the road: the business's renter education, hands-on training, and orientation should determine the experience level of each prospective operator. Although the information learned from the customer's Application to Rent may be useful, do not make final decisions solely upon that information. Rather, the decision to authorize a customer to operate a snowmobile should be made through a combination of customer disclosure and supervised orientation, regardless of the experience, training, and/or certification a prospective operator may say they have or indicate in their application.

## CUSTOMER ORIENTATION TECHNIQUES AND SUPERVISION

The following are the same techniques suggested in Chapter 1 for training employees. They can also be employed to provide orientation for rental agency customers:

### 1. ***Effective instruction requires small steps.***

Too much information delivered too quickly can overwhelm customers. There is a lot to know about the safe operation of a snowmobile, so take a step-by-step approach giving the customers time to absorb what they're expected to put into practice.

### 2. ***Effective training is chronological.***

Concentrate on instructing customers to perform a simple set of actions that they need to know and perform right away, rather than attempt to impart more knowledge that is unlikely to be used or needed while renting from the company. Be careful, however, to ensure that the basics are adequately covered.

### 3. ***Effective training is continuous, but not boring.***

People learn better in creative, energetic environments. Whenever possible, add a little variety to the training program, such as by progressing from written materials to a video presentation to hands-on training.

### 4. ***Effective training and supervision allows the rental center customer to feel a sense of accomplishment, even in a relatively short 15-minute pre-ride education session.***

Observing an instructor's demonstration is one way for novices to learn snowmobile fundamentals and safe snowmobiling practices. Then, allowing them to perform successfully on their own helps instill confidence. Customers who feel good about their accomplishments pay attention and learn more.

### 5. ***Effective training and supervision evaluates customers on an on-going Basis.***

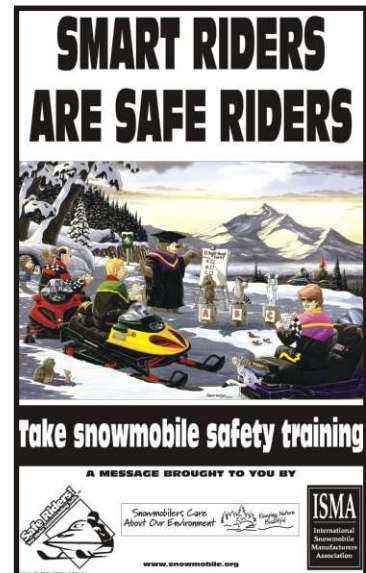
Continually measure customers' performance through to the end of their training, as well as during their riding experience. Observe customers in action, and discuss their accomplishments or shortfalls, to improve their performance. If problems occur that are serious and cannot be overcome, it may become necessary to remove customers from the activity immediately. Remember to document such action in their customer file.

A maximum student/teacher ratio of ten (10) to one (1) is recommended. The same ten to one ratio applies for on-trail guides. The business should develop a step-by-step lesson plan and checklist so its instructors can systematically cover all aspects of training without leaving anything out.

## **SNOWMOBILING SAFETY EDUCATION: SNOWMOBILE OPERATOR CERTIFICATION**

Regardless of previous snowmobiling experience, individuals who apply to rent and operate a snowmobile should be able to effectively demonstrate adequate snowmobile handling and operation. They should also receive information about location-specific snowmobiling hazards and issues prior to being authorized to rent a snowmobile.

This means that even a snowmobile renter who has completed an IASA approved course should be required to demonstrate adequate snowmobile knowledge and practical skills before being allowed to rent. A review of local trail hazards and rules and regulations particular to the area should be given to all applying to rent a snowmobile even if the individual meets the legal requirements for renting (*depending on the jurisdiction*) and is otherwise exempt from having to complete basic snowmobile safety instruction. The business is encouraged to document that this information has been given on an individual basis.



## **IASA RECOMMENDATIONS**

The International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) has developed recommendations to help ensure prospective riders receive adequate safety and responsible use information prior to renting a snowmobile. It is recommended that the following information be provided to rental customers:

- ◆ The specific design, recommended operational characteristics, and safety features of the snowmobile to be operated.
- ◆ The snowmobiling regulations specific to the area, including but not limited to private trails, private or public property operating/permission conditions, access points, and potential trail hazards.
- ◆ The common courtesies of operating a snowmobile on the trail and the potential affect on wildlife, the environment, and other users.

- ♦ A safe recommended distance between snowmobiles.

## Renter/Operator Education: Core Subjects

First and foremost, customers should understand that when operating a snowmobile they are, in fact, operating a motorized vehicle and that all the rules, regulations, and common courtesies apply. Safe and responsible operation of the snowmobile will depend upon the customer's knowledge of a variety of factors. The following should be summarized and provided to every person wishing to operate a rental snowmobile.

### SNOWMOBILING FUNDAMENTALS

- ♦ Design and operational characteristics of a snowmobile: braking on snow and ice, clutch/belt drive, turning, operating on hills or inclines, etc.
- ♦ Snowmobile controls: ignition switch or pull rope, emergency shutoff switch, lanyard shut down (*for those so equipped*), neutral/reverse/forward (*for those so equipped*), throttle, brake, headlight dimmer switch, hand/thumb warmers, warning lights, etc.
- ♦ Practical skills required to properly operate a snowmobile safely: riding positions, steering, stopping, accelerating, deep snow operation, riding steep slopes, icy conditions, getting unstuck, etc.
- ♦ Recommended on-board safety equipment: survival kits, whistles, space blankets, avalanche transceivers, etc.
- ♦ Personal safety recommendations: helmets, eye protection, foot protection, gloves, hat, appropriate layered clothing, etc.
- ♦ Potential environmental stressors: over-exposure to sun, cold temperatures, altitude, wind, etc.
- ♦ Other safety considerations: no long scarves to tangle in track, etc.
- ♦ Snowmobile trip preparation: file a trip plan so someone knows where to look if you are overdue on your return.
- ♦ Understanding the equipment's warning labels and owner's manual safety warnings where appropriate and necessary for customer safety.





## DEFENSIVE SNOWMOBILING

Operator alertness and awareness of the surroundings are keys to avoiding incidents and collisions. Staff should discuss the importance of defensive snowmobiling with customers, including:

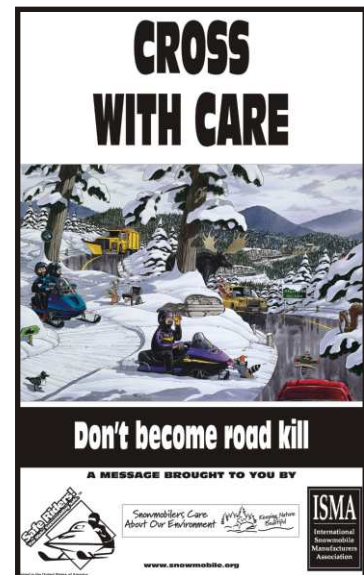
- ◆ Looking ahead and understanding the effects of tunnel vision.
- ◆ Continuous peripheral scanning of the rider's immediate environment.
- ◆ Being aware of other snowmobile riders and other trail users.
- ◆ Effects of reaction times and the time it takes for avoidance maneuvers or to stop.
- ◆ Safe following distances and the risks and perils of following another snowmobile too closely.

## RULES OF THE ROAD

Rental customers are expected to know the laws and courtesies of recreational snowmobiling, just like every other user on the trail. Safely navigating a congested trail can be tricky at the best of times.

Always obey the following rules and use caution when crossing roads. Remember that snowmobiles are not designed to operate on bare pavement:

1. Completely stop the machine before crossing the shoulder or main traveled portion of the highway.
2. Yield the right of way to all oncoming traffic.
3. Make the crossing only at an angle approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the highway and at a place where no obstruction prevents a quick and safe crossing.
4. In some areas, a snowmobile may cross a divided highway only if the crossing is made at an intersection of such highway with another public street or highway. In other areas, crossing divided highways is strictly prohibited.



There is an added danger when crossing railroad tracks. The sound of the snowmobile and others traveling with the group may prevent operators from hearing the sound of an oncoming train. Check your local laws pertaining to railroad crossings and operating upon railroad rights-of-way since it is often prohibited.

While snowmobiles are usually operated on trails designated for their use or cross-country in open play areas, they may also be allowed to operate upon designated plowed roadways in some states and provinces. If operating upon a plowed roadway, be certain it is, in fact, legally open to snowmobiles since snowmobile operation upon plowed roadways is illegal in most areas. Snowmobilers operating upon plowed roadways must use extreme caution since cars and trucks are difficult to control on snowy roads. Additionally, the plowed road surface can make a snowmobile hard to control. Always give conventional vehicles the right of way. Also assume that other drivers cannot see the snowmobile. Vehicle drivers are so used to looking for other vehicles that they often do not make a connection, even when they look right at a snowmobile. So always drive defensively as if the snowmobile cannot be seen by approaching vehicles.

There are restrictions as to which roads a snowmobile may travel upon, if they are allowed upon roadways at all. Check whether local laws allow travel on unplowed roads, on plowed roads in emergencies, on highways during certain times of the day, or along the sides of roads either on the shoulder or in the borrow pit.

Snowmobiles may be required to use a safety flag (*similar to a bicycle safety flag*) when operated upon roadways. These flags are typically made of a fluorescent orange material and extend at least five feet above the ground. Even if the area does not require one, it is a good idea to use one if a snowmobile will be operated upon plowed roadways.

Some basic safety rules apply to all types of machines or vehicles operating upon roads and highways:

1. Defensive Driving: Be prepared for situations involving pedestrians, intersections, approaching vehicles, and bad weather conditions. Use extra caution when operating at night.
2. It is against the law to operate a snowmobile while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Alcohol reduces your body warmth, slows your reflexes, causes drowsiness, and decreases alertness.
3. Obey all posted speed limits. Traffic signals apply to all vehicles. At an intersection, know who has the right of way. Always be sure to use hand signals to signal your turns.

## KNOWLEDGE, ETIQUETTE, AND COMMON COURTESY

Once a customer's orientation has concluded, staff should be confident that the operator knows and understands the rules and peculiarities of the area, including the not so obvious hazards, general snowmobiling etiquette, and common courtesies. An understanding of the following will also limit preventable mishaps and potential conflicts with other snowmobilers and recreationists:

### Snowmobiler's Code of Ethics

A snowmobiler will...

1. Be a good sports enthusiast and recognize that people judge all snowmobilers by your actions. A snowmobiler will use their influence with other riders and owners to promote fair conduct.
2. Not litter trails or trailheads. Nor will they pollute streams or lakes by their actions.
3. Not damage living trees, shrubs, or other natural features. They will go only where there is sufficient snow cover so as to not damage the land.
4. Will respect public and private landowners' property and rights.
5. Will lend a helping hand when they see someone in distress.
6. Will make themselves and their vehicle available to assist search and rescue efforts.
7. Will not interfere with or harass other trail users, other snowmobilers or other winter sports enthusiasts. They will respect the rights of other trail users to enjoy the winter recreational opportunities.
8. Will know and obey all federal, state, provincial, and local rules regulating the use of snowmobiles.
9. Will not harass wildlife and will avoid areas posted for the protection or feeding of wildlife.
10. Will stay on marked trails when operating in areas where snowmobile use is restricted to trails. Will obey all traffic laws when operating upon plowed roadways designated as open to snowmobiling.



## Sledder's Pledge

1. I will never drink and drive a snowmobile.
2. I will drive within the limits of my machine and my own abilities.
3. I will obey the rules and laws of the state or province I am visiting.
4. I will be careful when crossing roads, and always cross at a right angle to traffic.
5. I will keep my machine in top shape and follow a pre-op check before each ride.
6. I will wear appropriate clothing, including gloves, boots, and eye protection.
7. I will let family or friends know my planned route, my destination, and my expected arrival time.
8. I will treat the outdoors with respect. I will not litter or damage trees and other vegetation.
9. I will respect other peoples' property and rights, and lend a hand when I see someone in need.
10. I will not snowmobile where prohibited.

## DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

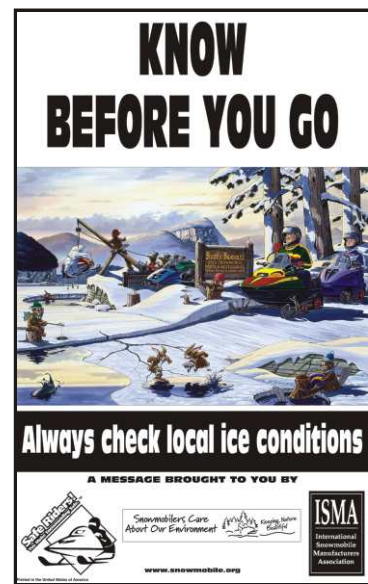
Operating under the influence of drugs or alcohol impairs the judgment, coordination, and reaction time required for safe operation of a snowmobile. Laws related to operating a motor vehicle while under the influence often also apply to snowmobiles on trails, just as they do to vehicles on highways, and operators can face the same level of fines (*loss of driver's license, jail time, etc.*). The use of drugs or alcohol while operating a snowmobile must be strictly prohibited and enforced by rental center staff. Staff must not rent to individuals under any circumstances when the use of drugs or alcohol is suspected or sobriety is in doubt. Studies have shown that environmental stressors such as wind and glare can further impair a snowmobile operator's performance while using drugs or alcohol. Therefore, snowmobile operation while under the influence of drugs or alcohol is a potentially deadly combination that must be avoided at all costs.



## LOCATION-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Since every riding area has unique circumstances and characteristics, customers should always receive training particular to the local riding area. It is extremely important that specific local area knowledge is clearly conveyed as part of basic rental operator training. The business should work with local agencies (e.g. *Department of Natural Resources, United States Forest Service, State and/or Provincial Parks, etc.*) to establish guidelines and content for this training. It may include:

- ◆ Potential hazards, their locations, and peculiarities: culverts, bridges, fence lines, steep slopes, thin ice, avalanche areas, restricted areas, etc.
- ◆ Area specific environmental concerns: winter wildlife areas, critical habitat areas, designated Wilderness area boundaries, etc.
- ◆ Low or minimum snowfall areas and special operating instructions to avoid or minimize impacts.
- ◆ Specific business rules and regulations.
- ◆ Forecasted daily weather conditions, including potential weather shifts and patterns, to ensure riders have adequate clothing along for their outing.



## ACCIDENT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Laws and regulations regarding what procedures must be followed in the event of an accident, crash, or emergency also pertain to operators of rental snowmobiles. For instance, a rental operator who witnessed, but was not involved in a crash, might still be required by state or provincial law to render assistance if assistance is required and to also give a statement. The requirement to notify law enforcement authorities usually depends upon the severity of the incident, the amount of property damage, or if there is personal injury that requires medical attention. Since all rental customers should know these regulations, applicable State, Provincial, and/or Federal regulations should be communicated to the customer and followed by staff. It is recommended that detailing records of any incident that involved the rental business's operations or customers be kept by the rental company indefinitely in the event of future claims or lawsuits.

## Customer Orientation:

**HOW A CUSTOMER IS INSTRUCTED IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT IS BEING TAUGHT!**

### **TELL-SHOW-DEMO: PRE-RIDE SAFETY CHECKLIST**

The **Tell-Show-Demo** method is a set of easy, yet comprehensive steps for the rental agency's instructors to teach, observe, and then decide whether or not a customer is ready and able to safely operate a snowmobile on their own.

STEP	METHOD	TYPES OF INSTRUCTION
1	TELL	Tell the customer "how & why," giving the rationale behind the procedure or activity.
2	SHOW	Show the customer the application on the equipment.
3	DEMO	Demonstrate what's been told & shown to the customer in a controlled viewing area.
4	OBSERVE	Observe the customer performing the skills and tasks on their own.
5	DECIDE	Decide if the customer's knowledge and skill is correct and adequate.
6	ENFORCE	Enforce the rules and regulations of the business.

It is recommended that all customized customer education materials and methods of training be reviewed by outside agencies and relevant service providers for safety and risk management purposes.

## Customer Orientation Checklist:

### IASA SNOWMOBILE RENTER ORIENTATION CHECKLIST

Government snowmobile administrators, snowmobile community representatives, and other stakeholders have used their collective knowledge and experiences to develop comprehensive safety education guidelines and recommendations for the snowmobile/outfitter rental industry to follow. This two page renter/operator and passenger orientation checklist is intended for the pre-ride instruction of every person who will be riding on a rental snowmobile. The main topics covered include:

- Protective clothing/equipment for operators and passengers.
- Snowmobile controls.
- Be attentive: most snowmobile injuries and deaths result from inattention.
- Potential hazards.
- No drugs or alcohol.
- Other rules and safety information that may apply to the local areas.
- Final check.

The complete renter orientation checklist is available to the snowmobile rental and outfitter industry through the American Council of Snowmobile Associations. It can also be copied from this reference manual.

For safety and risk management purposes, it is recommended that qualified staff review the Snowmobile Renter Orientation Checklist, or a similar checklist developed by the rental company, with every prospective rental customer. Once this has been completed to the staff's satisfaction, it is suggested that both the instructor and customer(s) sign and date it since the counter signatures indicate that orientation was provided and confirms that the customer understood and agreed to conform to the outlined safety and responsible use guidelines. It is recommended that at least two working copies of this declaration of orientation and understanding should be produced: the authorized operator should carry a copy on the snowmobile for the duration of the rental and the rental company or guide service should keep the other on file along with the customer's signed rental agreement and other relevant documentation.

## Operator Proficiency Testing

The snowmobile rental/outfitter company may choose to supplement the Tell-Show-Demo method and/or Snowmobile Renter Orientation Checklist with some form of additional testing. Such a test could include location-specific rider information, various elements of safe snowmobiling practices, and operational knowledge.

A written test can be a way of evaluating the customer's understanding to see if further instruction is required. If the customer does not achieve a predetermined test score, training should continue. When a wrong answer is identified, additional instruction should be given to help the student be able to demonstrate the necessary understanding and skills in a subsequent test. If a customer continues to have difficulty grasping the concepts or cannot demonstrate the physical skills necessary to safely operate a snowmobile, the business should decline renting a snowmobile to that individual. However, if training is performed properly, this shouldn't happen very often. The purpose of testing is not to eliminate people from riding, but rather to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to safely operate a snowmobile. If a customer cannot demonstrate this ability to the satisfaction of the instructor, the most prudent thing to do is not rent a snowmobile to them.

### **HANDS-ON SNOWMOBILE TRAINING**

While acquiring knowledge is the first step, rental customers should also be able to physically operate and/or properly ride on a snowmobile. The instructor should establish that the customer has understood the instruction that was given and is also able to apply that knowledge to safely and responsibly handle the activity. Customers, regardless of their background or experience, should participate in a short, hands-on orientation session. This orientation should focus on the design, operational, and safety characteristics of the snowmobile being rented.





## FORMS AND PROCEDURES

Upon completion of the customer orientation and optional hands-on instruction, it is recommended that the rental center staff:

- ◆ Complete customer orientation documentation, then sign and date it.
- ◆ Have the customer sign and date orientation documentation to indicate they have, in fact, received and understood the instruction.
- ◆ Ensure all documents indicate the rental customer's (*operators and passengers*) full name, the rental contract number, and the rental unit number.
- ◆ File customer orientation documentation.



## Snowmobile Safety Initiatives

### A Case Study

States and/or provinces may have specific snowmobile operator requirements and recommendations that apply to rental operators or to all snowmobile operators. As each state or province generally formulates its own rules and regulations, there may be variances from jurisdiction to jurisdiction regarding policies and procedures. Each rental business is advised to consult directly with the regulatory authority in its home area of operation. Examples of various jurisdictional requirements include:

#### ALBERTA

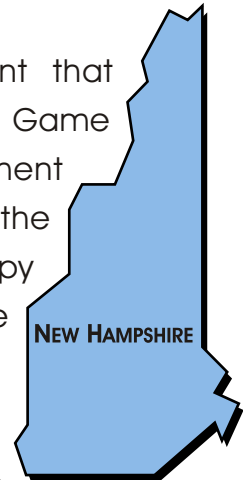
All snowmobile rental operators must be at least 18 years of age and have a driver's license. The renter/operator must carry proof of liability insurance. The signed rental agreement must be carried with the snowmobile operator.



## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Snowmobile rental operators must sign an acknowledgment that educational material prepared by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department has been read and is understood. The Department supplies a form to the Rental Agent who in turn provides to the snowmobile renter. One copy is kept by the renter, the second copy is retained by the rental company, and the third copy of the acknowledgment is returned to the Fish and Game Department.

Rental Agents are required to be licensed by the Game and Fish Department and rental snowmobiles must display a special 'rental' registration.



## ONTARIO

All snowmobile operators must have either an automobile driver's license or a special 'motorized snow vehicle driver's license', which is typically issued to persons 12 years of age or older until an automobile driver's license is earned. Every snowmobile, rental or otherwise, must carry proof of liability insurance. And all snowmobilers are required to wear a helmet.



## QUEBEC

The snowmobile renter/operator must hold a valid driver's license and be at least 21 years of age. The Rental Agreement must be carried on the rental unit and contain the rental unit's number and the period of time for which the unit is rented; and a copy must be carried by the operator on the rental snowmobile as well as be kept on file at the rental business location.



## Snowmobiler's Code Of Ethics

In addition to the Tell-Show-Demo method (*page 43*) and Snowmobile Renter Orientation Checklist (*page 53*) previously reviewed, consideration should be given to using a Snowmobiler's Code of Ethics summary for customer orientation. This checklist can provide the snowmobile rental operator with additional information about snowmobile operation and safety. It should clearly emphasize the "Do's" and "Don'ts" of proper snowmobile operation from a safe and responsible snowmobiler's perspective and should re-enforce, but not necessarily be limited to, information covered elsewhere in the instructional material.

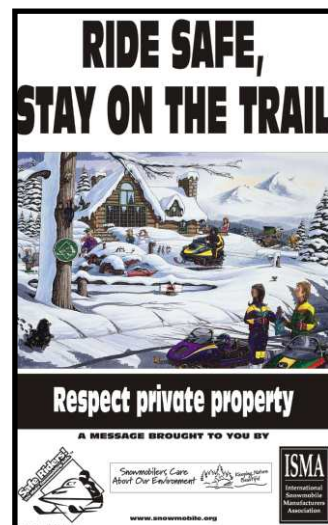
### CUSTOMER DO'S

- ◆ Know the local hazards and forecasted weather conditions.
- ◆ Understand the importance of protective equipment and proper clothing while riding a snowmobile.
- ◆ Be alert and constantly scan the trail or riding area for other snowmobiles, trail users, and hazards.
- ◆ Ride defensively, be courteous, and use common sense.
- ◆ Follow the rules of the road and abide by all trail signs.
- ◆ Steer clear of restricted areas and respect environmentally sensitive areas.
- ◆ Know the operational characteristics of the snowmobile, along with its capacities and limitations: vehicle's range based upon normal fuel capacity and consumption, stopping ability/distance, maneuverability/steering capability, ability in deep snow, ability on steep side slopes, etc.
- ◆ Respect the rights of all other winter recreationists.
- ◆ Obey posted speed limits.
- ◆ Understand all items specified in the rental agreement and waivers.
- ◆ Know the assumed risks and potential consequences of careless or reckless behavior while riding a snowmobile, including the potential for fines or injury.
- ◆ Understand that the rental can be terminated at the discretion of the business for inappropriate behavior, general misconduct, or failure to follow rules or regulations.

## CUSTOMER DON'TS

- ◆ Do not operate at high speeds, especially when near houses, buildings, livestock, wildlife, trailheads, or other recreationists.
- ◆ Do not use alcohol or drugs.
- ◆ Do not engage in reckless, careless, or inappropriate behavior.
- ◆ Do not overload a snowmobile or ride double unless the snowmobile is designed for 2 passengers.
- ◆ Do not get too close to other snowmobiles or other recreationists.
- ◆ Do not operate the snowmobile in areas with limited snow cover or on bare ground.
- ◆ Do not disturb wildlife or livestock.
- ◆ Do not ignore sudden changes in weather conditions.
- ◆ Do not disobey local, state/provincial, or federal snowmobile rules, regulations, and policies.
- ◆ Do not allow the snowmobile rental unit to be operated by anyone who has not completed the required rental orientation, training, and rental agreement documentation.
- ◆ Do not disobey rental company guidelines, instructions, or policies.

The rental/outfitter company should consider practices outlined in the Case Study information and IASA recommendations to prepare printed materials for customers' review and orientation. Sample handout materials are presented as an Appendix at the end of this manual. Regardless of what methods are used, training and orientation should conform to applicable local requirements and IASA's Safety Education Standards to ensure customer orientation is current, comprehensive, and covers all recommended subjects for snowmobile rental operations and snowmobile education.



## Customer Educational Materials and Visual Aids:

Customer educational materials and visual aids can help reinforce information and behavior that are necessary to handle the snowmobile safely and responsibly on the snow. Be sure that educational materials and visual aids are relevant and are kept current. Educational materials such as posters, videos, printed safety materials, and laminated reference cards are available from IASA members for use in training customers. International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association's (ISMA) Safe Rider! educational materials are also updated annually and are readily available at no cost.

In addition, IASA, ISMA, government agencies, and state and provincial snowmobile associations are good resources for snowmobile specific educational materials covering topics such as the rules of the road, trail signing, safe and responsible riding, and environmental considerations.

### EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS GUIDELINES

- ◆ If used, on-site safety educational materials should be properly displayed, easy to view, and easy to read.
- ◆ If used, signage should be designed to promote safe, responsible, and environmentally friendly behavior by all snowmobile operators, and not just renters.
- ◆ A continuous loop educational video (IASA or State/Provincial approved videos, ISMA Safe Rider! videos, etc.) can be used to complement the instruction process and to reinforce existing training. A video can also help keep customers properly focused while waiting.
- ◆ Brochures, posters, safety videos, etc. should generally be available for customer reference.
- ◆ Staff should have knowledge of educational materials so they can easily answer customer questions and/or concerns.

**Keep in Mind:** *Even excellent instructors can have bad or too busy days. It can be hard to document whether a topic was covered if it ever comes down to the renter's word against the instructor's. By always offering the viewing of a video and/or other printed materials, there will never be a doubt the topic was presented, which will help the business should a lawsuit ever occur.*



## GUIDED SNOWMOBILE RENTALS

For the purposes of this manual, a guided rental is a snowmobile rental accompanied by a guide employed by the rental company where the rental snowmobile is used within the sight and physical presence of the guide. Rental companies should check with local law enforcement authorities and land management agencies to determine what is required or recommended for their location and/or type of operation. In some cases, such as on United States Forest Service lands, a special use permit may be required from the land managing agency for the business to offer guided trips.

Authorized rental customers should be the only persons allowed to operate a rental snowmobile. A relatively easy way to identify authorized renters is to have them wear a brightly colored vest, arm band, or other visual aid for subsequent ease of identification and enforcement. Many rental companies also use a large company logo or identification on their rental snowmobile suits to help identify their customers.



## UNGUIDED SNOWMOBILE RENTALS

For the purposes of this manual, an unguided rental is a snowmobile rental where the operator is **not** accompanied by a guide employed by the rental company and the rental snowmobile is used out of the sight of the company and its employees. All renter/operators signing an unguided rental contract should understand that it is not permissible, under any circumstances, to allow any unauthorized person to operate the rented snowmobile. They should have successfully passed the snowmobile operator orientation, and signed the appropriate rental documentation, as per the rental company's policies and procedures, to do so.

# Customer Orientation

The rental contract for unguided rentals should stipulate that no one be permitted to operate a snowmobile that has not proven to be proficient by the businesses standards. Liability takes on new connotations once the snowmobile is taken outside of the business's direct control and supervision that should be thoroughly addressed with the rental company's insurance provider and attorney.

A review of local hazards, local rules and regulations, and peculiarities of the area should be a MUST for all individuals wishing to rent an unguided snowmobile.

## **TRAILERING AND TRANSPORTATION**

The rental company should determine how much practical trailering experience a customer has before allowing rental snowmobiles to be taken from the rental center by trailer. Based upon the information disclosed in the application to rent, the customer may require focused trailering instruction and training. Without exception, the customer should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the following:

- ◆ Basic towing skills and knowledge of road safety issues.
- ◆ Safety procedures and equipment checks before transport.
- ◆ Proper snowmobile loading and unloading procedures.

## **PROPER FUELING PROCEDURES**

All unguided snowmobile renters should be instructed how to avoid spillage when refueling their snowmobile to reduce the chance of spilling oil or gas on the snow or ground which could potentially harm the environment.



## Snowmobile Rental Operator Orientation Checklist

### EVERY OPERATOR OF A RENTAL SNOWMOBILE SHOULD BE ABLE TO:

#### 1. Know the Snowmobile They Are Renting and Identify Its Key Controls.

- Know the capabilities, characteristics, and limitations of the snowmobile they are renting.
- Identify key snowmobile controls: throttle, brake, lights, kill switch, and hand/thumb warmers.

#### 2. Select and Use Suitable Protective Clothing.

- Understand temperature, precipitation, wind chill, and other factors in clothing selection.
- Understand layering of undergarments for warmth, comfort, and moisture release.
- Select a helmet, suit, and eye protection based on required features and desired characteristics.
- Select mitts/gloves, boots, socks, face mask/baclava, and sunglasses based on current and potential conditions.

#### 3. Know Applicable Rules and Regulations.

- Understand and commit to practice courteous and responsible riding behaviors.
- Possess required operator's license or endorsement, if required.
- Possess required vehicle registration, and/or trail permit.
- Know and understand local rules and regulations pertaining to a snowmobile's operation.

#### 4. Safely Start, Operate, and Control the Snowmobile.

- Conduct a pre-operation check of the vehicle and immediate operation area.
- Safely start, monitor, and shut down the snowmobile's engine.
- Demonstrate ability to control the snowmobile's speed, direction, and braking.
- Demonstrate basic hand signals and compliance with regulatory signage.

# Customer Orientation

## 5. Maintain, Troubleshoot, and Secure the Snowmobile.

- Perform routine snowmobile maintenance such as gasoline and oil injection replenishment.
- Understand basic troubleshooting such as drive belt and spark plug replacement.
- Understand how to secure the snowmobile by key removal, and proper protocol for parking.

## 6. Identify and Select Appropriate Snowmobiling Opportunities.

- Know the general extent and nature of area snowmobile trail systems.
- Know the general extent and nature of off-trail or cross-country snowmobile opportunities in the area.
- Understand area closures and restrictions and their purpose.

## 7. Use Communication and Travel Aids.

- Understand and be able to use maps to assist in effective snowmobile travel.
- Understand directional and informational signage related to snowmobiling.
- Know the availability of weather reports, trail condition reports, information boards, etc.
- Know the importance of leaving anticipated destination and return time information.

## 8. Understand and Manage Potential Risks and Impacts.

- Understand the risks that may be encountered while operating the snowmobile.
- Understand the available resources and strategies for coping with common risks.
- Know the coverage requirements, and options for, snowmobile damage and personal liability insurance.
- Know the potential environmental impacts of snowmobiling and how to minimize or prevent them.

I HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED ON AND UNDERSTAND THE RULES AND INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS ORIENTATION FOR THE OPERATION OF A RENTAL SNOWMOBILE.

---

Signature of Snowmobile Renter

Date

---

Signature of Rental Agent/Outfitter

Date