

84.87 OPERATION; REGULATIONS BY POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Operation on streets and highways.** (a) No person shall operate a snowmobile upon the roadway, shoulder, or inside bank or slope of any trunk, county state-aid, or county highway in this state and, in the case of a divided trunk or county highway, on the right-of-way between the opposing lanes of traffic, except as provided in sections 84.81 to 84.90. No person shall operate a snowmobile within the right-of-way of any trunk, county state-aid, or county highway between the hours of one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise, except on the right-hand side of such right-of-way and in the same direction as the highway traffic on the nearest lane of the roadway adjacent thereto. No snowmobile shall be operated at any time within the right-of-way of any interstate highway or freeway within this state.

(b) Notwithstanding any provision of paragraph (a) to the contrary:

(1) under conditions prescribed by the commissioner of transportation, the commissioner of transportation may allow two-way operation of snowmobiles on either side of the trunk highway right-of-way where the commissioner of transportation determines that two-way operation will not endanger users of the trunk highway or riders of the snowmobiles using the trail;

(2) under conditions prescribed by a local road authority as defined in section 160.02, subdivision 25, the road authority may allow two-way operation of snowmobiles on either side of the right-of-way of a street or highway under the road authority's jurisdiction, where the road authority determines that two-way operation will not endanger users of the street or highway or riders of the snowmobiles using the trail;

(3) the commissioner of transportation under clause (1) and the local road authority under clause (2) shall notify the commissioner of natural resources and the local law enforcement agencies responsible for the streets or highways of the locations of two-way snowmobile trails authorized under this paragraph; and

(4) two-way snowmobile trails authorized under this paragraph shall be posted for two-way operation at the authorized locations.

(c) A snowmobile may make a direct crossing of a street or highway at any hour of the day provided:

(1) the crossing is made at an angle of approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the highway and at a place where no obstruction prevents a quick and safe crossing;

(2) the snowmobile is brought to a complete stop before crossing the shoulder or main traveled way of the highway;

(3) the driver yields the right-of-way to all oncoming traffic which constitutes an immediate hazard;

(4) in crossing a divided highway, the crossing is made only at an intersection of such highway with another public street or highway or at a safe location approved by the road authority;

(5) if the crossing is made between the hours of one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise or in conditions of reduced visibility, only if both front and rear lights are on; and

(6) a snowmobile may be operated upon a bridge, other than a bridge that is part of the main traveled lanes of an interstate highway, when required for the purpose of avoiding obstructions to travel when no other method of avoidance is possible; provided the snowmobile is operated in the extreme right-hand lane, the entrance to the roadway is made within 100 feet of the bridge and the crossing is made without undue delay.

(d) No snowmobile shall be operated upon a public street or highway unless it is equipped with at least one headlamp, one tail lamp, each of minimum candlepower as prescribed by rules of the commissioner, reflector material of a minimum area of 16 square inches mounted on each side forward of the handle bars, and with brakes each of which shall conform to standards prescribed by rule of the commissioner pursuant to the authority vested in the commissioner by section 84.86, and each of which shall be subject to approval of the commissioner of public safety.

(e) A snowmobile may be operated upon a public street or highway other than as provided by paragraph (c) in an emergency during the period of time when and at locations where snow upon the roadway renders travel by automobile impractical.

(f) All provisions of chapters 169 and 169A shall apply to the operation of snowmobiles upon streets and highways, except for those relating to required equipment, and except those which by their nature have no application. Section 169.09 applies to the operation of snowmobiles anywhere in the state or on the ice of any boundary water of the state.

(g) Any sled, trailer, or other device being towed by a snowmobile must be equipped with reflective materials as required by rule of the commissioner.

Subd. 1a. **Organized contests.** (a) Nothing in this section or chapter 169 shall prohibit the use of snowmobiles within the right-of-way of any state trunk or county state-aid highway or upon public lands or waters under the jurisdiction of the commissioner of natural resources, in any organized contest, subject to the consent of the official or board having jurisdiction over the highway or public lands or waters.

(b) In permitting such contest, the official or board having jurisdiction may prescribe such restrictions or conditions as they may deem advisable.

Subd. 2. **Operation generally.** It shall be unlawful for any person to drive or operate any snowmobile in the following unsafe or harassing ways:

- (1) at a rate of speed greater than reasonable or proper under all the surrounding circumstances;
- (2) in a careless, reckless or negligent manner so as to endanger the person or property of another or to cause injury or damage thereto;
- (3) without a lighted head and taillight when required for safety; or
- (4) in any tree nursery or planting in a manner which damages or destroys growing stock.

Subd. 2a. **Operation prohibited on airports.** It is unlawful for any person to drive or operate any snowmobile on an airport defined in section 360.013, subdivision 39, or other applicable law.

Subd. 2b. [Repealed, 1994 c 615 s 28]

Subd. 2c. **Application of speed limits to testing activities.** (a) A speed limit established by the commissioner in rules adopted under section 84.86 does not apply to a snowmobile that is being operated as part of a testing program established by a snowmobile manufacturer if:

- (1) the snowmobile is operated for testing purposes by a driver employed by the snowmobile manufacturer;
- (2) the snowmobile is clearly marked as a test machine; and
- (3) the snowmobile is operated in compliance with all other applicable laws and rules.

(b) A card containing a photograph of the driver and identifying the driver as a test driver for the manufacturer must be in the driver's possession at all times when the snowmobile is being operated at a speed in excess of the limit established by the commissioner under section 84.86.

Subd. 3. Regulation by political subdivisions. (a) Notwithstanding anything in this section to the contrary, a county board may by resolution permit the operation of snowmobiles upon the roadway, shoulder, or inside bank or slope of any county highway or county state-aid highway if safe operation in the ditch or outside bank or slope thereof is impossible, in which case the county board shall cause appropriate notice thereof to be given.

(b) Any county, city, or any town acting by its town board, may regulate the operation of snowmobiles on public lands, waters, and property under their jurisdiction and on streets and highways within their boundaries by resolution or ordinance of the governing body and by giving appropriate notice, provided such regulations are not inconsistent with the provisions of sections 84.81 to 84.88 inclusive and rules promulgated thereunder. However, no such governmental unit may adopt an ordinance which (1) imposes a fee for the use of public land or water under the jurisdiction of either the commissioner of natural resources or any other agency of the state, or for the use of any access thereto owned by the state, or a county or city; or (2) requires a snowmobile operator to possess a motor vehicle driver's license while operating a snowmobile.

Subd. 4. Snowmobile speed limit; lakes greater than 10,000 acres. Notwithstanding any law or rule to the contrary, a county may enact an ordinance to raise the speed limit up to 65 miles per hour for snowmobiles traveling on marked trails during daylight hours on lakes greater than 10,000 acres, subject to the approval of the commissioner of natural resources. Within any posted speed limit, it remains unlawful for any person to drive or operate any snowmobile at a rate of speed greater than is reasonable or proper under all of the surrounding conditions or circumstances.

Subd. 5. Snowmobile operation during firearms deer season. Snowmobile operation during the firearms deer-hunting season is restricted as provided in section 84.777, subdivision 2, and rules adopted by the commissioner.

History: 1967 c 876 s 9; 1969 c 1 s 1; 1969 c 695 s 7,8; 1969 c 1129 art 10 s 2; 1971 c 491 s 2; 1971 c 577 s 8; 1973 c 123 art 5 s 7; 1973 c 701 s 1; 1974 c 51 s 1; 1974 c 239 s 1; 1976 c 2 s 48; 1977 c 31 s 1; 1981 c 363 s 1; 1985 c 248 s 70; 1986 c 444; 1987 c 368 s 1,2; 1989 c 331 s 2; 1992 c 573 s 2; 1997 c 226 s 8; 2000 c 478 art 2 s 7; 2002 c 355 s 5; 2004 c 244 s 1; 2005 c 72 s 1; 2014 c 290 s 5; 2022 c 55 art 1 s 18; 2023 c 60 art 4 s 12