



## Snowmobile Recreational Council Law Enforcement Committee Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Rib Mountain Conference Center & Dales Weston Lanes, Weston and via Zoom

**Committee Members Present:** Sam Landes - Chair, Mike Holden, Bob Lang, Don Mrotek, Sue Smedegard, Holly Tomlanovich, Erica Volker

**Other Council Members Present:** Lynsey Burzinski, Ann Degenhardt, Joel Enking, Abby Haas, Gary Hilgendorf, Tara Krall, Andy Malecki, Dale Mayo, Sue Smedegard, Drew Nussbaum (Dept of Tourism)

**DNR staff attendance:** Jacob Holsclaw, Jillian Steffes, Pat Anderson, Kurt Byfield, Chris Halbur, Jeremy Holtz, Jeff Pennucci

**Public attendance:** Lori Heideman, Dave Newman and other members of the public

### 1. Call to order following Infrastructure

### 2. Agenda Repair - None

### 3. Acceptance of minutes of previous meeting

Motion to approve previous committee meeting minutes by \_\_ and 2<sup>nd</sup> by \_\_. MOTION PASSED

### 4. Committee Chair Comments

- **Sam Landes**

- Not a great season. Fix objects becoming one of the major factors in snowmobile accidents – 6 accidents this year hitting trees, where speed was a factor.

### 5. DNR Reports and Updates – Jacob Holsclaw, LE OHV Administrator

- Two “Sled Safe weekends:
  - January 31 – Feb 2nd and Feb 7-9th.
  - 935 miles of trails and 56 lakes patrolled
  - 441 snowmobilers contacted
  - 150 warnings (trail pass & registration were top issues)
  - Five OWI arrests
  - 98 citations – no registration and fail to comply with regulatory signs were top violations. 7 citations for loud/modified exhaust.
- Partnered again with MADD to message riding sober on a snowmobile. This was a group effort with several surrounding states including Minnesota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Illinois. Second season of doing this.
- Department made a big effort for ice safety and attempted to include snowmobile and ATV safety on ice whenever possible. Even with the colder temps, there have been several fatalities from breaking through ice or driving into open water.
- We had planned on sound level training to new wardens as well as rec patrols this summer or early fall. Delayed until budget issues are resolved.
- Fatalities:
  - January and February 9 fatal crashes.
  - 78 % (7 out of 9) had not completed a snowmobile safety course.
  - This year 40-year-olds need the safety course.
  - Average age 49.

2025 Snowmobile Fatal Crash Summary As of March 3rd, 2025								
#	Date	County/C-V-T	Location	Age / Gender / Residency	Accident Type	WI Safety Certified?	Helmet Used?	Alcohol Involved/BAC
#1	1/18/2025	Ashland / Ashland	Frozen Waterbody	20 / M / WI	Drove into Open Water	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on Lake Superior and entered open water approximately 100 yards off the break wall.								
#2	1/22/2025	Iron / Mercer	Public Road	83 / M / AZ	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on a roadway adjacent to the snowmobile trail at a high rate of speed and struck a snow berm at the end of the road.								
#3	1/25/2025	Vilas / Plum Lake	Frozen Waterbody (marked corridor)	58 / F / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Yes / .02
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was in a group of four snowmobiles traveling across Star Lake at a high rate of speed. The operator passed several other sleds in the group to take the lead. Operator/victim was then observed to miss the boat landing exit and crashed into a tree on shore.								
#4	2/1/2025	Forest / Nashville	Frozen Waterbody	25 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	Yes	Yes	Yes / Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on Crane Lake and struck small trees and the shoreline embankment.								
#5	2/11/2025	Oneida / Hazelhurst	Frozen Waterbody	22 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	Yes	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim failed to negotiate the entrance to the snowmobile trail off of McCormick Lake and struck trees on the shoreline.								
#6	2/13/2025	Bayfield / Grand View	Public Trail	64 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim was traveling on a designated trail and failed to negotiate a curve. Victim passed away on 2/17/2025 due to injuries sustained in the crash.								
#7	2/14/2025	Oconto / Doty	National Forest Trail	55 / M / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Preliminary investigation suggests a subject was operating a snowmobile on a USFS ungroomed two rut trail, lost control and went off the left side of the trail. The snowmobile and operator then struck several trees.								
#8	2/21/2025	Douglas / Brule	Public Trail	51 / F / WI	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim failed to negotiate a corner, struck a tree, and was ejected.								
#9	2/22/2025	Vilas / St. Germain	Public Trail	59 / M / IL	Collision with a Fixed Object	No	Yes	Pending
<i>Synopsis</i> Operator/victim failed to negotiate a right turn and struck a tree.								

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- **Enforcement and Safety data (2024):**
  - Top citations:
    - 71 - Operate snowmobile without valid safety certificate
    - 66 - Owner operating/giving permission to operate on public trail without proof of temporary trail use receipt
    - 46 - Give permission to operate snowmobile without valid registration
  - 5,888 students certified in snowmobile safety
  - 235 in-person classes
  - 499 active volunteer instructors
  - 2827 hours of enforcement with 24 different sheriff's depts. and DNR
  - For 2024 to 2025 season pending audit – ongoing

**6. Strengthening Trespassing fines and updating laws**

- Still encountering challenging situation where local law enforcement needs to be involved, but if the landowner lives out-of-state it is difficult to get them involved. Increasing fines continues to be a major point of focus.

**7. Increased aid to local LE**

- Aid to local LE was increased to \$596,000. Last year only \$262,000 was used. Many counties did not use it. Counties are encouraged to use this resource.

**8. Public Comment**

- None

**9. Committee member reports, comments and items**

- Mike Holden – We haven't looked at the trail signing handbook since 2019, perhaps its time to review?

**10. Items for next meeting**

- None

**11. Adjourn**

Motion to adjourn by \_\_\_\_, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Mike. MOTION PASSED