

LOCALNEWS

Course intended to make safer riders

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

Minnesota is known for its love of snowmobiling and ample opportunity to take part in the growing winter activity.

The state's vast trail network is made up of 22,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails, and the Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association reports there are about 220,000 snowmobiles registered in the state.

But snowmobiling safely requires riders to know and practice the rules of safe riding. Toward that effort, Minnesota requires snowmobile certification for anyone born after Dec. 31, 1976.

On Monday, riders took to a course at Voyageurs National Park's Rainy Lake Visitor Center for the final part of the certification. They had already completed an online course on snowmobile safety, operation, and laws. Monday's one-day snowmobile safety class included a morning classroom review of safety information and a performance driving course.

The course includes how to handle signage, when and how to signal to other riders and how to legally cross a roadway all in a controlled environment, said Minnesota Conservation Officer Darrin Kittelson, an instructor of the course.

The course is designed to help make for safer snowmobiling for everyone, but he also said riders need to know the local laws, as well as state laws about snowmobiling.

Several local concerns have been raised since

enough snow has fallen in Borderland to lure snowmobilers to lakes and trails.

Among those concerns are how to properly ride on a Koochiching County road.

Kittelson said state law prohibits the use of roads by snowmobiles, but the Koochiching County Board has allowed county and township roads to be used by snowmobiles going to and coming from a trail if no ditch exists on which to travel.

However, Kittelson said if the roads have ditches, state law requires snowmobiles to ride in the bottom part or outside slope of a ditch.

Koochiching County Sheriff Perryn Hedlund pointed to a policy adopted in 2006 by the county board for allowing snowmobile operators to use the ditch section of any county and township road with the following stipulations:

1. The furthest right edge of the roadway of any county or township road shall be used only to access and return from an established snowmobile trail or lake if there is not a ditch section;
2. Snowmobile operators must travel in the direction of traffic unless there is a board resolution on certain roads restricting snowmobile usage to only one side;
3. Snowmobile operators must be over 18 years of age or have a valid license to operate a snowmobile if between the ages of 14 and 18;
4. The snowmobile operators shall not exceed 15 miles per hour and must yield to all traffic including pedestrians and animals;
5. All state laws pertaining



STAFF PHOTO BY SPENSER BICKETT

A snowmobiler Monday completes the driving portion of a DNR safety certification course at the Rainy Lake Visitor Center. Participants have already completed the online part of the course.

to snowmobile use and operation shall be followed;

6. Snowmobiles with studs on the tracks shall not be allowed on any bituminous (paved) surfaced road;

7. There shall be no usage when there is insufficient snow cover to prevent damage to a bituminous surfaced road;

8. There shall be no usage on roads with limited visibility unless authorized by special board resolution;

9. The county board has the right to revoke usage on any road if there are numerous complaints by adjacent residences or abuse by snowmobilers.

Kittelson stressed snowmobilers may only use the far right side of roads if there is no ditch, and they may only use the roads to access and return from established trails or the lake. And, he said, snowmobiles must travel in the direction of traffic.

Speed on roads is limited to 15 miles per hour, regardless of the vehicle traffic speed posted on the road, Kittelson said.

Kittelson also said the snowmobile safety course discusses the need to heed

the state's trespassing laws when riding.

"It's no different when hunting or any other recreational activity — if the land is agriculture, you need permission to go on the land," he said. "Or, if it's posted, you need permission from the land owners."

He and Hedlund said riders may unknowingly trespass by following the tracks of snowmobiles who went before them. But they said snowmobilers can damage septic systems or seedlings by riding on private property or may put themselves at risk of hitting an object hidden below the snow.

The many kinds of ownership — private, public, private but accessible to the public — of lands in Koochiching County can make it difficult to determine whether it is legal to operate on a particular place that is not on a marked trail.

"If you operate a snowmobile, it's your responsibility to know where you are at," Kittelson said.

Other safety concerns addressed in the class, and that all riders should know, is how to safely cross a road.

Kittelson said snowmobilers must first come to a complete stop, yield to all traffic and cross the road at a 90-degree angle.

"We tell the kids in youth classes that a lot of people aren't looking for snowmobilers," he said. "Instead, they're worried about driving and oncoming traffic — not a snowmobile coming from a road ditch."

Among the most important factors in snowmobiling is speed, Kittelson said, which is a maximum of 50 mph unless designated otherwise.

He encouraged snowmobilers to drive to the circumstances.

"I tell the youth in the classes they may drive responsibly, but it's the other person coming at you that might not be driving responsibly," Kittelson said.

At night, he said people may take curves quickly, cutting corners and some operators are more brave and may drive faster. Mixing darkness with speed, and adding alcohol can be dangerous, he said.

"That's when things can go amok," Kittelson said.

Just the facts

Koochiching County allows snowmobile operators to use the ditch section of any county and township road with the following stipulations:

- The furthest right edge of the roadway of any county or township road shall be used only to access and return from an established snowmobile trail or lake if there is not a ditch section
- Snowmobile operators must travel in the direction of traffic unless there is a board resolution on certain roads restricting snowmobile usage to only one side
- Snowmobile operators must be over 18 years of age or have a valid license to operate a snowmobile if between the ages of 14 and 18
- The snowmobile operators shall not exceed 15 miles per hour and must yield to all traffic including pedestrians and animals
- All state laws pertaining to snowmobile use and operation shall be followed
- Snowmobiles with studs on the tracks shall not be allowed on any bituminous (paved) surfaced road
- There shall be no usage when there is insufficient snow cover to prevent damage to a bituminous surfaced road
- There shall be no usage on roads with limited visibility unless authorized by special board resolution
- The county board has the right to revoke usage on any road if there are numerous complains by adjacent residences or abuse by snowmobilers.

PROMOTE TOTAL BODY HEALTH, INSIDE AND OUT!

PROTECT YOUR SKIN FROM THE ELEMENTS

With Scientifically Developed Shielding Lotion from Skin MD



Ideal for:

- Dry, cracked, chapped skin, skin allergies
- Eczema, psoriasis, contact dermatitis
- Sunburn, snowburn, bug bites
- Swimming in chlorine pools
- Save & effective for diabetic & chemotherapy patients
- Safe for kids

SOOTHE YOUR BODY AND WARM YOUR HEART WITH NEW BIODYNAMIC ORGANIC TEAS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF TEA

JUST ARRIVED!
Biodynamic Organic Teas



Natural and Complex Tastes:

- Organic Turmeric Cinnamon
- Organic Heirloom Chamomile
- Organic Breakfast Green Tea
- Organic Ginger

City Drug

283-3061
Mon. - Sat. 8 - 6
314 3rd St., Int'l Falls



REGISTER TO
WIN
Russell Stover
Assorted Fine Chocolates
2 lb. 2 oz. • \$29.99 value
Drawing held Feb. 10th

WOW! WHAT A FESTIVAL! WHAT A COMMUNITY!

Thank You ♦ Thank You ♦ Thank You

IceBox Days XXXV & Freeze Yer Gizzard Blizzard Runs 35 AMAZING YEARS!

Adam Mannausau/ Falls Firefighters
Allen Rasmussen/Timer
America's Duty Free
Austin Schaa
Backus Community Center
Border Bar & Pizza House
Bronco Boosters
Byrne and Carole Johnson
Cora Lewis & Jeremy
Chad Korpi & Jesse Belanger/
Boot Hockey
Cheryl Marble
Chief Adam Mannausau/
Falls Firefighters
Chief Mike Musich/International
Falls Law Enforcement
Convention & Visitors Bureau
Dairy Queen Grill & Chill
Dave Harder/Up North Builders
Dennis Jonson/City Crews
Derek Briggs/ Shot Gun Starts
Dr. Dean Cowman
Dr. Kimberly Perkins
Dick Ostroot
Doug Grindall/Rotary Club

Volunteers/Course Control:
Jenell Feller, Carol Grim, Mary Kaye &
Jeff Hardwig, Kathy Hultman,
Brad Krasaway, Kelly Millerbernd,
Amy Mortenson, Mike Ward, Shane
Talley, Libby Ward, Clint Chase,
Mike Carney
Duty Free Americas
Elks Lodge No. 1599
Falls Ambulance/EMTs
Falls Education Foundation
Falls Elementary Students & Teachers
Good Samaritan Society
Gizzard Girls: Amy Amundsen,
Kalsie Briggs, Crystal Cronin,
Cathy Engelking, Jenica Whitbeck,
Chrissie Heinlen, Kasi Joyce,
Jenny Chivers - Wilson,
Val Lennox, JoAnn Smith,
Kyra Briggs,Tawna Hilfer,
Toni Korpi, Desiree Arnold,
Linda Torseth, Mary Wardas
Grandma's Marathon of Duluth
Jackie Briggs/Capture Your Moment
Photography
Jim Lyman
Kyle Toratti

Koochiching County Sheriff's
Department
Laurel Beager & Staff, The Journal
Mark Rooney
Mayor Bob Anderson/
City of International Falls
Miner's County Market
Minnesota State Patrol
Moose Lodge No. 1259
Northland Foundation
Occupational Development Center
Paul Nevanen/Timer
Pete Schultz
Polar Polers Ski Club
RaeAnne Conat & Little Cheerleaders
Runners Packets Contributors
Sisters Akorn & Fellows
Stewart's Super One Foods
St. Thomas Aquinas
St. Thomas Students
Top Ten Video
U-Care
U.S. Border Patrol
VFW #2948 & Club
Viking Bar & Lounge
Voyageurs National Park

Gratitude to these generous sponsors:

Platinum Sponsors

Boise Paper

Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Inc.
Midcontinent Communications

Essentia Health

Rainy River Community College

Gold Sponsors

KSDM/KGHS Radio
Minnesota Power
93.1 The Border

Silver-Plus

Minnesota Energy Resources
The Journal/ North Star Publishing

Silver Sponsor

MD&W Railway

Bronze Sponsors

America's Best Value Inn & Suites

American Woods & Waters Realty
Bergstrom Wood Products
Border State Bank
Bremer Bank
Chocolate Moose Restaurant
City Cab
City Drug
CliftonLarsonAllen LLP
County Market Liquor
Edward Jones Investments/
Shane Talley
Fagen, Inc.
Frontier Communications
Gearhart's Floral & Gifts
Hardee's Restaurant

McDonald's
Miner's County Market
Northern Lumber
Rainy Lake Medical Clinic
Rainy River Veterinary Hospital
Ronning's
Stride Fitness & Health Inc.
& J2W Apparel
Swanky Sweet Pea
Thunderbird Lodge
Voyageur Marine (Kabetogama)
Waschke Family GM Center
Wenber Transfer
Wherley Motors

**HATS OFF TO THE CITY OF INTERNATIONAL FALLS
FOR STUNNING FIREWORKS IN SMOKEY BEAR PARK!!**



International Falls Area
Chamber
chamber@intfalls.org • 283-9400
freezeyergizzardrun.com

