

# SUMMARY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE LAW

## INTRODUCTION

Pennsylvania has beautiful and challenging opportunities for all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding. Many trails have been developed on public and private lands to accommodate this recreational pursuit.

This pamphlet summarizes the ATV requirements of state law and regulations. The state law is known as the Snowmobile and All-Terrain Vehicle Law and is contained in Chapter 77 of the PA Vehicle Code. The state regulations are in Title 17 Pa. Code Chapter 51. This pamphlet is not intended to be a substitute for the actual law and regulations.

In addition to state law and regulations, riding on municipal and private property may be further regulated by municipal ordinance.

## REGISTRATION

Pennsylvania residents owning and intending to use their ATV in Pennsylvania (except those used exclusively as a farm or business vehicle) must be titled and registered with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Snowmobile/ATV Registration Section.

### General Registration

This registration permits the machine to be operated off the owner or operator's private property. The registration fee is \$20 for two years. The owner is provided with a registration plate, an expiration sticker and a Certificate of Registration wallet card.

### Limited Registration

This registration is for machines used exclusively on the property of the owner. There is no fee and the registration does not expire. The owner is provided with a registration plate and a card, but no expiration sticker.

All-Terrain Vehicles are defined as follows:

1. Class 1 ATV – A motorized off-highway vehicle, which travels on three or more off-highway tires and has a maximum width of 50 inches and a maximum dry weight of 1200 pounds.
2. Class 2 ATV – A motorized off-highway vehicle, which travels on three or more off-highway tires and has a width which exceeds 50 inches or a dry weight which exceeds 1200 pounds.

Applications for registration of ATVs are available from the DCNR's Snowmobile/ATV Registration Section. The ATV registration application form must be completed and sent to the DCNR, Snowmobile/ATV Registration Section, P.O. Box 8553, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8553, along with the required fee and sales tax statement. Registration applications are also available from: ATV dealers, Forest Districts and State Park Offices or download and print from the web at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/snowmobile](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/snowmobile).

Exempt from the registration requirements are ATVs owned by non-residents covered by a valid registration in their state, province or country that honors a Pennsylvania registration.

Temporary registrations are available from registered ATV dealers.

## NON-RESIDENT REGISTRATION

To legally operate an ATV in Pennsylvania that is registered in another state where Pennsylvania's registration is NOT honored, the ATV must also be registered in Pennsylvania. Proof of liability insurance is also required.

## TITLES

All ATVs in Pennsylvania must have a title issued by DCNR. The cost of a title is \$22.50. The only exceptions to this requirement are those ATVs registered with the Department prior to February 12, 1987. These ATVs do not require a title until they are sold by the owner.

## SALE – THEFT – DESTRUCTION – CHANGE OF ADDRESS

The ATV owner shall notify the DCNR's Snowmobile/ATV Registration Section in writing of any change of address within 15 days.

Upon the transfer, destruction or theft of an ATV, the reverse side of the Certification of Registration must be properly filled out in the spaces provided, signed by the owner, and returned to the DCNR's Snowmobile/ATV Registration Section.

## OPERATION

ATVs may be operated:

1. On state-owned property on clearly marked and previously designated ATV trails;
- \* 2. On highways and streets when necessary to cross a bridge or culvert;
- \* 3. On highways and streets during periods of emergency when so declared by a governmental agency having jurisdiction;
- \* 4. On highways and streets for special ATV events of limited duration that are conducted according to a prearranged schedule under permit from the governmental unit having jurisdiction

\* **MUST BE 16 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.**

An ATV may make a direct crossing of a street or two-lane highway provided:

- 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;
- The ATV is brought to a complete stop before crossing the shoulder or highway;
- The driver yields the right-of-way to all oncoming traffic that constitutes an immediate hazard.
- In crossing a divided highway, the crossing is made only at an intersection of such highway with another public street or highway.
- Driver must be at least 16 years of age unless he has a safety certificate and is under the direct supervision of a person at least 18 years of age.

It is illegal to operate an ATV:

- On State Forest Roads open for use by licensed motor vehicles.
- At the rate of speed that is unreasonable or improper under existing conditions or in excess of the maximum limits posted for vehicular traffic;
- In a careless way so as to endanger the person or property of another;
- While under the influence of alcohol, narcotics or drugs.

## Designated Roads

State and local highways and roads may be designated and posted for ATVs by the government authority with jurisdiction over the road.

Township roads designated for ATVs are posted with a green sign containing the side view silhouette of an ATV and rider in white.

Some roads may be designated and posted as **joint-use** roads open to both ATVs and licensed motor vehicles. Joint use roads are posted with signs stating that both types of vehicles may use the road. ATV operators on joint-use roads must be at least 16 years of age.

Municipal ordinances may further regulate the use of ATVs on roads within their jurisdiction.



Municipal Roads

## Private Property

ATVs may not be operated on private property without the consent of the owner. Use of ATVs on private property may be further restricted by municipal ordinance.

## ATV TRAILS

Certain trails on state forest land and the Allegheny National Forest have been designated for ATV use. ATV trail information is available from the Bureau of Forestry website at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry) and the Allegheny National Forest website at [www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/allegheny).

## REGISTRATION NUMBERS

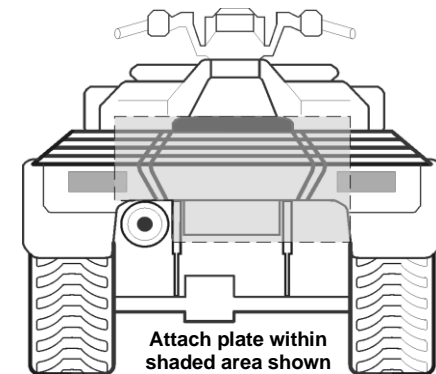
The five-digit registration number containing a combination of numbers and letters is embossed on an aluminum plate, which measures four inches in height and seven inches in width. This permanent registration plate is to be attached to the back of the machine near the center and as high as possible. **The plate must be horizontal and clearly visible from behind the ATV.** This plate remains with the ATV if it is sold or transferred to a different owner.

General Registration requires a valid expiration sticker to be attached to the plate.

## REGISTRATION PLATE



EXPIRATION DATE



## OPERATION OF ATVs BY YOUTH

No one under 8 years of age shall operate an ATV on any state-owned property.

No person from age 8 to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday shall operate an ATV except on lands of his parent or guardian, unless he or she has completed a prescribed ATV safety training course and received an ATV safety training certificate. Age 8 and 9 year old operators are restricted to an engine size of 70cc or less.

## ATV SAFETY TRAINING COURSE

Safety training classes are given by trained volunteer instructors. All youth ages 8-15 who complete the course will receive a safety course certificate. For information on a safety instructor near you contact DCNR's Bureau of Forestry at (717) 783-7941.

## ACCIDENT REPORTS

The operator of an ATV involved in an accident must stop and give his or her name and address, the name and address of the owner of the ATV and its registration number to the other person(s) involved in the accident or to a police officer.

If the accident results in the injury or death of any person or property damages to the estimated amount of \$100 or more, the operator must report the matter in writing within seven days to the DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17105. It is a violation of the Snowmobile/ATV Law to not report the accident to the DCNR.

Accident forms are available upon request from the Bureau of Forestry and State Park offices and state police stations.

## LIABILITY INSURANCE

Liability insurance coverage is required for all ATVs that are required to have general registration. Proof of this coverage should be carried by the operator. The law does not specify a minimum dollar amount for this coverage. If you have questions about insurance coverage for ATVs contact the PA Dept of Insurance consumer hotline at 1-877-881-6388.

## SNOWMOBILE & ATV FUND

All registration fees are deposited in a special Snowmobile/ATV Fund. DCNR uses monies from this fund to carry out the Snowmobile/ATV registration, safety education and law enforcement requirements of the Snowmobile/ATV Law, to develop and maintain trails on public land and to encourage trail development on private land through grants.

## ENFORCEMENT

All law enforcement officers in the state, including local and state police, are authorized to enforce the Snowmobile/ATV Law. Municipal and state police have enforcement authority on private land.

## FINES

Failure to register your ATV or obtain liability insurance may result in a fine of \$300.

A violation of other provisions of the Snowmobile/ATV Law is punishable by a fine of \$50 to \$200 plus the cost of prosecution for a first offense, and a fine of \$100 to \$300 plus the cost of prosecution for a second offense.

## EQUIPMENT

All ATVs operating in Pennsylvania must be equipped with a brake system capable of producing deceleration of 14 feet per second at a speed of 20 miles per hour; and a muffler in good working order. The sound intensity produced by an ATV may not exceed 99dba, or decibels, when measured at 20 inches from the tailpipe.

All ATVs operated during hours of darkness or when visibility is less than 500 feet must be equipped with an operating headlight and taillight. The headlight must produce a white light sufficient to reveal persons and vehicles at a distance of 100 feet. The taillight must produce a red light plainly visible during darkness from a distance of 500 feet.

## HELMETS

It is illegal to operate an ATV without a securely fastened helmet on the head of the operator.

## FOR REGISTRATION INFORMATION:

DCNR-Snowmobile/ATV Registration Section  
P.O. Box 8553  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8553

Location:  
9 Dogwood Lane  
Middletown, PA 17057

Telephone (717) 783-9227  
Tollfree (866) 545-2476

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## Summary of

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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND  
NATURAL RESOURCES



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AND NATURAL RESOURCES