



THE HANDBOOK

of Michigan Off-Road Vehicle
Laws and Riding Basics



2023 Edition



Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Our Mission:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use, and enjoyment of the state's natural resources for current and future generations.

**Take an Off-Road Vehicle Safety Course!
For information on courses, visit our
website at:
www.michigan.gov/recreationalafety**

**To ensure the enjoyment
of future riders, report
riding violations.**

**Call or Text
1-800-292-7800**



THE HANDBOOK of Michigan Off-Road Vehicle Laws and Riding Basics

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STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
LANSING



M. SCOTT BOWEN
DIRECTOR

Dear Off-Road Vehicle User:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is pleased to provide several outdoor recreational opportunities for your use and enjoyment, including designated Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) trail and riding areas.

With many program responsibilities, the Department must balance its goal of providing designated ORV riding opportunities with its duty to protect and manage the State's natural resources. While most ORV use is lawful, previous Department evaluations have identified unacceptable levels of environmental damage resulting from illegal ORV use on state-owned lands.

Continued environmental damage from illegal ORV use is a serious matter that must be addressed by both the Department and the ORV community. If illegal ORV use is not significantly reduced or eliminated, the privilege to use ORVs on state-owned land will diminish. Please stay on designated ORV trails/areas. If you see other users damaging the environment, report them by calling or texting **1-800-292-7800**. The ORV community must step forward and make it clear that illegal ORV use not only hurts the environment, but also harms the reputation of legal users and threatens the future of legal ORV opportunities in Michigan.

Thank you for your continued help on this matter. Together, we can make a difference.

Consider sharing your ORV knowledge and experience by becoming an instructor. The DNR is seeking individuals who are willing to teach ORV safety classes in their communities. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an ORV instructor, visit our website at www.michigan.gov/recreationalsafety.

www.michigan.gov/dnr

Great Lakes, Great Times, Great Outdoors!

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What Is an Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)?

Michigan law defines an off-road vehicle (ORV) as any motor vehicle that can be operated cross-country (without benefit of a road or trail) over land, snow, and other natural terrain. This includes multi-track or multi-wheel vehicles; all-terrain vehicles (ATVs); motorcycles or related multi-wheel vehicles; amphibious machines (water-to-land and back); hovercrafts; and other vehicles that use mechanical power, including two- or four-wheel-drive vehicles that are highway registered but operated off highways or off roads.

The following are *not* considered ORVs by Michigan law: registered snowmobiles; farm, construction, or logging vehicles when being used in usual work practices; and military, fire, emergency, and law enforcement vehicles.

Do Michigan's ORV Laws Apply to All ORVs?

Yes! Michigan laws about ORVs apply to all ORVs, regardless of their size, type, or engine size. However, some Michigan laws may apply only to ORV operators of certain ages.

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Note: This handbook provides a summary of Michigan law at the time of printing and is not intended to be legal advice. Because laws are subject to change and it is a recreational user's responsibility to know and understand the current laws, users are encouraged to consult the most current regulations.

It is not the intent of this handbook to replace knowledge gained from taking either an online or classroom safety course. To learn about ORV safety training options, see www.michigan.gov/recreationalsafety.

Licensing and Titling

Why Michigan Has Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Laws

Minimum ages for off-road vehicle (ORV) operation are the result of an extensive review by the Michigan Legislature. The hearing process caused everyone to focus on the alarming statistics regarding young riders.

ORV Accident Data

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, of the 3,353 reported all-terrain vehicle (ATV)–related fatalities of children younger than 16 years of age (from 1982 through 2018), 1,465 (44%) were younger than 12 years of age. Additionally, other young victims were left paralyzed, brain damaged, or with other serious permanent injuries. Most of the accidents involving young riders could be traced to a number of factors such as lack of supervision, machine design characteristics, and lack of training. Some parents appeared to be unaware of many of these hazards.

As accident data shows, the consequences of a few daring moments on an ORV can be devastating.

- Preserving and enhancing public safety in the field of outdoor recreation are of paramount importance.
- Recognizing that there are potential safety hazards in ORV riding, the Michigan Legislature has enacted regulations that directly affect:
 - Safety education for those under 16 years of age
 - Safety equipment that is required of all ORV operators and passengers
 - Strict controls on the use and possession of alcohol while operating ORVs
 - Unlawful operation on roads open to regular vehicle traffic
- Responsibilities come with the ownership and operation of an ORV. Adults bear the burdens of passing on responsible conservation and outdoor ethics to young operators under their supervision and setting the example for all other ORV enthusiasts.

- It is important to consider the potential impact of ORVs on Michigan's fragile environment, and to operate ORVs in a manner that minimizes conflicts with others who are enjoying the fields and forests of the state.
- Michigan's conservation officers play an important role in ensuring that ORV recreational opportunities are available for safe and responsible users. They accomplish this through aggressive enforcement and a continued willingness to respond to public concerns. They are an important bridge between ORV users and the non-riding public. Use them and assist them to ensure the future of ORV recreation.



Licensing and Titling Your ORV

ORV Certificate of Title

- Every ORV sold through a dealer must be accompanied by a certificate of origin. This certificate of origin contains all of the information needed for applying for a certificate of title. The application for a title is made to the Secretary of State.
- It is unlawful for a seller to sell or transfer an ORV without transferring the title or for a buyer to purchase or acquire an ORV without obtaining a title.
 - If an ORV is purchased through a dealer, application for a title will be made by the dealer on behalf of the buyer.
 - If an ORV is purchased from someone other than a dealer, the buyer applies for a title.
- Application for a title must be made within 15 days of purchase or transfer.

Note: A Michigan title is *not* required on ORVs owned by non-residents and used in Michigan.

ORV License

- The ORV must be licensed with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) if the ORV will be used anywhere other than the private property.
- The DNR issues licenses for all ORVs on an annual basis. The annual fee for an ORV license is \$26.25.
 - In addition, an ORV trail permit is required to operate on state-designated ORV trails, routes, or areas. The cost of the ORV trail permit is an additional \$10.00.
- Licenses and permits are valid from April 1 through March 31 of the following year, regardless of the date of purchase.
- Vehicles that are licensed under the Motor Vehicle Code as “street vehicles” require an ORV license only when they are being used as an ORV. A street-licensed ORV does not need an ORV license to use forest roads, but it will need an ORV license and an ORV trail permit if it is used on designated trails or in areas designated for cross-country use.
- An ORV license is *not* required for Secretary of State street-licensed vehicles when used where a conventional two-wheel-drive vehicle is allowed to operate, including on designated ORV routes. If you must use four-wheel drive to operate on a designated ORV route, the vehicle is being used as an ORV and must have an ORV license and an ORV trail permit.

Where to License ORVs

ORV licenses are available from the DNR at DNR Operations Service Centers, over the Internet at **www.michigan.gov/dnrlicenses**, by mail, through participating ORV dealers, and through participating hunting and fishing license agents.

For licensing information, call the DNR at **517-284-6057**.



- An ORV license is required for ORVs operating on the frozen surface of public waters.
- Private landowners, owners' family members, and their invited guests are not required to display a DNR license on an ORV that is operated exclusively on the owners' private property.
- Licensing is required of ORVs used in areas open to public operations, regardless of whether the ORV is owned by a resident or non-resident of Michigan.

Displaying the ORV License

It is unlawful to operate an ORV without having a valid DNR license permanently attached and visibly displayed on the vehicle in the following manner.

- **Two-Wheel Vehicle:** Center the ORV sticker on the exposed rear fender or at a visible place facing forward on a front suspension fork.
- **Three- or Four-Wheel Vehicle (ATV):** Place the ORV sticker on a flat metal surface, a bumper, or a plate permanently attached to the rear of the ORV.



- **Other ORVs:** This includes UTVs, dune buggies, and four-wheel-drive trucks. Place the ORV license centered and visible on the rear of the vehicle.

Required Equipment

Before an ORV may be operated on any property, the operator is responsible for ensuring that the vehicle and its riders have the required equipment. Although there are some exceptions to when certain protective equipment is legally required, the Michigan DNR always recommends the use of proper safety gear. (See the following section for equipment requirements and exceptions.)

For Operators and Passengers

- All ORV operators and passengers must wear a U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)–approved crash helmet and protective eyewear, except when:
 - The operator and passengers are wearing properly adjusted and fastened safety belts in an ORV equipped with a roof that meets or exceeds the standards for a crash helmet **or...**
 - The ORV is operated on a state-licensed game bird hunting preserve at a speed of 10 miles per hour (mph) or less **or...**
 - The ORV is towing a fishing shanty or supply shed over the frozen surface of public waters at the minimum speed required to maintain controlled forward movement of the vehicle or while traveling to and from a fishing shanty at a speed of not greater than 10 mph **or...**
 - The ORV operator is the invited guest or family member of the landowner or the landowner of the property where the ORV is being operated. This last exception does not apply to the following operators:
 - Operators less than 16 years of age
 - Operators 16 or 17 years of age, unless a parent has given consent for the operator to ride without a helmet
 - Operators participating in an organized ORV riding or racing event if the property owner receives consideration for use of the property
- Michigan law gives some street-legal motorcycle operators the option of not wearing a helmet when operating on roadways. This law **does not** apply to ORVs, and helmets are still legally required to be worn by operators and passengers on ORVs.

■ **ORV helmet**

- Helps prevent serious head injury.
- Should fit snugly and fasten securely.
- May be a full-face helmet or an open-face helmet plus eye protection.
- Stick a reflective tape on your helmet to make you more visible at night.
- Must be a U.S. DOT–approved crash helmet.

■ **Goggles or other eye protection**

- Be aware that branches, road debris, and insects can hit your eyes and distract or even blind you.
- Sunglasses do not provide adequate protection. Use goggles or a face shield. Keep in mind that goggles may reduce your peripheral vision.
- Choose high-impact eye protection that bears the marking VESC8 (or V-8) or Z87.1 or is made of hard-coated polycarbonate.
- Carry gray-tinted eye protection for bright days, yellow-tinted for overcast days, and clear for night rides.
- Make sure your eye protection is scratch-free, securely fastened, and well-ventilated to avoid fogging.

For ORVs

The ORV must be equipped with the following.

- **Braking System:** A braking system in good working condition that operates by either hand or foot
- **Throttle System:** A throttle system designed to return the engine speed to idle automatically and immediately when pressure is released
- **Spark Arrestor and Muffler:** A U.S. Forest Service–approved spark arrestor and muffler in good working condition, in constant operation, and meeting applicable sound-level standards (see “Sound Emission Regulations”)

- **Seating:** The ORV must be equipped by the original manufacturer with a seat for each passenger.
- **Lights:** If operated during the hours of one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise, must have and display all of the following:
 - A lighted headlight
 - A lighted taillight
 - A brake light, brighter than the taillight



Young ORV Operators

Operator Age Restrictions

Restrictions are in effect on the operation of ORVs by children **under the age of 16**, including a safety education requirement (see “ORV Safety Education Requirement”). There also are specific obligations that fall upon the parents or legal guardians of ORV riders under the age of 16 and upon the owners of ORVs.

Operation of Three-Wheel ATVs

No one under the age of 16 may operate any three-wheel ATV.

Operation of Four-Wheel ATVs

- No one under the age of 10 may operate any four-wheel ATV *except* on private land while performing farm-related work operations.
- Children 10 and 11 years old may operate a four-wheel ATV only when ***all*** of the following conditions are met.
 - The ATV is being operated on land owned by the child’s parent or guardian ***and...***
 - The operator is under the **direct visual supervision** of an adult ***and...***
 - The operator possesses a valid ORV safety certificate.
- Children 12 to 15 years old may operate a four-wheel ATV only when ***both*** of the following conditions are met.
 - The operator is under the direct visual supervision of an adult ***and...***
 - The operator possesses a valid ORV safety certificate.

Direct Visual Supervision: Direct observation with the unaided or normally corrected eye and being close enough to come to the immediate aid of a youthful ORV operator

Operation of Other ORVs

Children under 16 years old may operate other ORVs (trail bikes, for example) only when *both* of the following conditions are met.

- The operator is under the direct visual supervision of an adult *and...*
- The operator possesses a valid ORV safety certificate.

Remember...

The parents or legal guardians of a child under the age of 16 are legally responsible if they permit the child under their care to violate any of the ORV laws. The owner (or person in control) of an ORV is also responsible if his or her ORV is operated by a youngster.

Restrictions on Crossing Roads

- No child under the age of 12 may cross any street, highway, or county road while operating any ORV.
- Children who are at least 12 years old may cross streets and roads (only at right angles) if they are under the direct visual supervision of an adult *and* have a valid ORV safety certificate.

ORV Safety Education Requirement

- All ORV operators under 16 years old are required to possess a valid safety training certificate when operating an ORV.
- To obtain a safety certificate, the operator must take an ORV safety education course and pass the certification exam.
- The operator must carry the safety certificate on his or her person and present it to a law enforcement officer.



Information on ORV Courses

Information on courses and scheduling can be obtained by calling the DNR at **517-284-6000** or by visiting the DNR website at **www.michigan.gov/recreationsafety**. For special youth requirements at Silver Lake State Park, call **231-873-3083**.

Summary of Young Operator Regulations

Age of ORV Operator (years)				
	Under 10	10–11	12–15	16+
Allowed to operate a three-wheel ATV?	No	No	No	Yes
Allowed to operate a four-wheel ATV?	No except on private land while performing farm-related work operations	No except on land owned by the parent or guardian, under visual supervision, and with ORV certificate	Yes if under visual supervision and with ORV certificate	Yes
Allowed to operate other ORVs (trail bikes, etc.)?	Yes if under visual supervision and with ORV certificate	Yes if under visual supervision and with ORV certificate	Yes if under visual supervision and with ORV certificate	Yes
Allowed to cross street or highway?	No	No	Yes if under visual supervision and with ORV certificate	Yes
Age and Engine Size: For your child's safety and comfort, you must match your child with an ORV that is appropriate for his or her size and experience level.				

Land Use Rules

Indiscriminate ORV use has damaged fragile ecosystems on both public and private lands. Complaints of erosion on hills and trails, destruction of stream banks and beds, and conflicts with other users have led to more restrictive rules to control ORV abuses.

Report Abuse

For the future of your sport, as well as the future of the resources, you must know and closely follow the operating regulations and encourage others to do likewise. Violations of these and other rules should be reported immediately to the nearest DNR office or by calling or texting the DNR Law Enforcement Division's "Complaint" hotline at **1-800-292-7800**.



ORV Land Use Definitions

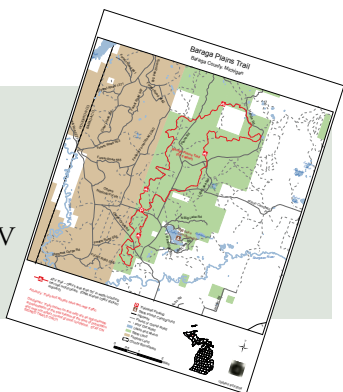
The DNR oversees more than four million acres of land used for a variety of purposes. Wise use of those lands includes preserving natural features and wildlife habitat and encouraging a variety of recreational uses. Just as other users are limited in their activities in order to protect and conserve these vital resources while minimizing conflicts with other activities, ORV enthusiasts are restricted in where and how they may operate.

- Signs that you may see on state roads, trails, and routes are shown toward the end of the handbook.
- The following terms may be used when describing where or how ORVs may be operated on state-owned lands.
 - **Designated:** Any place that is posted as open for ORV use with appropriate signs.
 - **Designated Area:** An area that has signs for cross-country ORV use posted by the DNR. An ORV license is required.

- **Designated Route:** A forest road or other road that is designated by the DNR for ORV use.
- **Forest Roads:** Hard-surfaced roads, gravel or dirt roads, or other routes capable of travel by a two-wheel-drive, four-wheel conventional vehicle designed for highway use, except an interstate, state, or county highway.
- **Forest Trail:** Designated path or way that is not a route.
- **Highway:** The entire width between the boundary lines of a way publicly maintained when any part of the way is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel.
- **Designated ORV Trail:** Designated paths or ways that are motorcycle-only trails, ORV trails, or ORV routes. An ORV license is required.
 - **Motorcycle-Only Trails:** These trails are maintained at a width of 24 inches on the ground and a width of 40 inches at handlebar height. Only two-wheeled motorcycles are allowed to operate on these trails legally.
 - **Motorcycle and ATV Trails:** These trails are open only to ORVs up to 50 inches in width.
 - **ORV Routes:** These routes are maintained at a width of 72 inches and are open to all ORVs.

ORV Trail Maps

Visit www.michigan.gov/orvinfo and click on "State-designated ORV trails and routes" under "Where to ride" to obtain ORV trail maps for state-owned lands.



ORV Operation on State-Owned Lands

- **State Forest Lands:** ORV restrictions vary by location.
 - **Statewide:** ORV use on designated trails is limited to vehicles with an overall width of 50 inches or less. Off-trail or off-route operation outside of a designated area is prohibited except for hunters operating an ORV at speeds of 5 mph or less for the purpose of removing deer, bear, or elk. ORV operation is permitted on designated trails, routes, and state forest roads, unless posted as closed.
- **State Game Areas:** *All* motorized vehicle operation is prohibited except on established roads open to the public. Some forest roads in state game areas now permit ORVs. To know more about the state game areas that permit ORVs, visit www.michigan.gov/orvinfo. These areas are found primarily in the southern third of Michigan.
- **State Parks and State Recreation Areas:** ORV operation is prohibited in all state parks and recreation areas except in designated areas of Silver Lake State Park. Five additional state parks allow ORV use from campsite or designated area to nearby ORV trails (Baraga, Bewabic, Clear, Muskallonge, and Twin Lakes).

Cross-Country ORV Operation

Cross-country ORV operation on state-owned lands is permitted only at:

- Designated areas at Silver Lake State Park in Oceana County
- St. Helen Motorsport Area in Roscommon County
- Black Mountain Scramble Area in Cheboygan County (Operation of a motorized vehicle that is greater than 50 inches in width is prohibited within the boundaries of the Scramble Area.)
- Holly Oaks ORV Park in Oakland County (extra fee may apply)

ORV Operation on National Forest Lands

In all national forests, motor vehicles can be used only on roads, trails, or areas that are designated as open. This includes all motorized wheeled vehicles from ATVs to street-legal vehicles.

Motor Vehicle Use Maps are published for each forest to show the designated system of roads, trails, or areas available for motor vehicle use by vehicle class and, if appropriate, by time of year. Motor Vehicle Use Maps are updated regularly to show changes. The public is encouraged to provide suggestions on changes. Motor Vehicle Use Maps are free to the public and available at Forest Service offices or from Forest Service websites.

For more information, you can call or visit the following websites.

Forest Service Travel Management and OHV Program

www.fs.usda.gov/recreation/programs/ohv/

Huron-Manistee National Forests

1-800-821-6263

www.fs.usda.gov/hmnf

Hiawatha National Forest

906-428-5800

www.fs.usda.gov/hiawatha

Ottawa National Forest

906-932-1330

www.fs.usda.gov/ottawa



Prohibited ORV Operation on Other Lands

- Roads, streets, and highways maintained for year-round automobile travel are closed to ORV operation, including the shoulder and the right-of-way. (That is, the entire width between boundary lines of public ways maintained for vehicular travel is closed to ORVs.) However, ORVs registered as motor vehicles by the Secretary of State may be operated on the roadway. In addition, ORVs are prohibited from operation on any part of an interstate highway.
- ORVs may be operated on a roadway in accordance with a local county ordinance. The ORV rider is responsible for contacting the local authorities to find out which roadways are open to ORV use. In addition, ORVs may be operated on a State Trunk Line Highway if it is part of an approved and signed Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) ORV Connector Route.
- ORVs operating under a county ordinance are required to:
 - Operate with the flow of traffic.
 - Operate on the far-right portion of the roadway or shoulder.
 - Operate at a speed no greater than 25 mph or a lower posted speed limit.
 - Not operate in a manner that interferes with traffic on the roadway.
 - Operate single file.
 - Operate displaying a lighted headlight and taillight.
 - Have affixed an ORV license as required by law.
- Private land is closed to ORV operation, except for use by the landowner and the landowner's invited guests. *The failure of a landowner to post or fence private property against ORV use does not imply consent to ORV operation.*
- ORVs that display a valid ORV license may be operated on the frozen surfaces of public waters. However, the ORV may not be operated within 100 feet of a person, an ice fishing shanty, or an area that is cleared for ice skating, unless the ORV is being operated at the minimum speed necessary for controlled forward movement.

- *An ORV may not be operated in a manner that creates an erosive condition.* Michigan's soils, beaches, and shorelines are fragile, and ORV operation in these areas and along stream banks and other waterways is restricted.
- It is unlawful to operate any ORV in or on the waters of any stream, river, marsh, bog, wetland, swamp, or quagmire, unless you are driving on a bridge, culvert, or similar structure.

ORV Operation on Various Land Types

Land Type	ORVs 50 Inches or Less in Overall Width (Most ATVs and Trail Bikes)	ORVs More Than 50 Inches in Overall Width (Trucks, Dune Buggies, and Tracked Vehicles)
State forest lands	On forest roads and designated trails and routes. Black Mountain Designated ORV Scramble Area (Cheboygan County). St. Helen Motorsport Area (Roscommon County).	On forest routes and roads unless posted as closed.
State game areas	No motorized vehicle operation except on established roads open to the public. ORVs are prohibited.	
State parks & recreation areas	Silver Lake State Park (SLSP), Oceana County, is only state park where cross-country (scramble) operation is permitted. The park rules here are more restrictive than state law. Please contact SLSP directly at 231-873-3083 for more information.	
National forest lands	Check with the Forest Supervisor's Office or appropriate District Office.	
Local government lands (county, etc.)	Subject to ordinances and signing or posting. ORV access routes may be established by local ordinance.	
Commercial forest lands, public utility right-of-way, and other private lands	Only with permission of the landowner.	
Streams, rivers, bogs, wetlands, marshes, etc.	ORV operation of all kinds prohibited. You may only cross any of these on bridges, culverts, or other structures.	
State and U.S. highways	ORV operation is prohibited on any part of an Interstate Highway but may be operated on a State Trunk Line Highway if it is part of an approved and signed MDOT ORV connector route.	
County roads, other roads open to cars	ORV operation prohibited on roadway and shoulder unless opened by local ordinance as designated ORV access routes.	

Riding Your ORV

Accidents

- The operator of an ORV involved in an accident resulting in injury to a person must stop immediately at the scene and secure medical aid or transportation.
- The operator of an ORV involved in an accident resulting in injury to a person, death, or estimated property damage of \$100 or more must immediately notify the State Police or Sheriff's office of the county in which the accident occurred and complete an accident report.

Alcohol

ORV riding, like any other activity involving a motor vehicle, demands the full attention of the operator. This is reflected in the rules regarding alcohol use while operating an ORV, which are virtually identical to the laws regarding alcohol in the motor vehicle code.

- Open containers of alcoholic beverages may not be transported in or upon an ORV unless in a trunk or compartment separate from the passenger compartment of the vehicle.
- An ORV operator is considered to have given implied consent to chemical tests of blood, breath, or urine for blood alcohol levels.
- A statutory presumption of intoxication exists for a person with a blood alcohol level of 0.08 grams or more per 100 milliliters of blood, per 210 liters of breath, or per 67 milliliters of urine.
- A person who operates an ORV in Michigan either while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance or with an unlawful blood alcohol content *and* who causes a serious impairment of a body function of another person is guilty of a felony.

- A person convicted of operating an ORV either while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance or with an unlawful blood alcohol content will have six points assessed against his or her driver's license. A person convicted of operating an ORV while visibly impaired will have four points assessed against his or her driver's license.



Penalties

- Criminal penalties range from a misdemeanor to a felony. Civil penalties can range up to \$500. Misdemeanors are punishable by a fine of not less than \$250 or more than \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both a fine and imprisonment.
- Persons may be held financially responsible for ecological damage caused by their ORV and ordered to restore such damaged property to the original condition.
- Additional penalties for operating an ORV under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances can be imposed and are more severe.
- A person convicted of manslaughter, negligent homicide, or a felony resulting from ORV operation will have six points assessed against his or her driver's license.
- **Serious criminal and ecological violations** also may result in seizure and condemnation of the ORV.

Sound Emission Regulations

Excessive noise is a common complaint made against ORV users.

- All ORVs must have, in good working condition and in constant use, a muffler that will meet or exceed all sound emission standards set by state law.
- Exhaust noise must not exceed 99 dB(A)—or 94 dB(A) on vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1986—when tested according to the provisions of the SAE J-1287 test. (Refer to the manufacturer's documentation.)
- Users should replace all worn or damaged exhaust systems with a quality muffler.
- Motocross motorcycles are designed for closed course competition and not for recreational riding. These vehicles must be modified before being operated on public trails, routes, or land.

ORV Operation Regulations

- If your license to operate an automobile has been suspended or revoked (regardless of the state where the suspension originated), you may not operate an ORV in Michigan until the suspension or revocation has been terminated by the court.
- An ORV operator must stop upon the signal of a law enforcement officer.
- On private property, an ORV operator must stop upon the signal of a landowner.
- In addition to restrictions on state-owned lands and other violations previously noted, ORV operation is prohibited:
 - In any forest nursery or planting area
 - On a DNR-dedicated natural area
 - In any area in a manner that would injure, damage, or destroy trees or growing crops
 - In any area in a manner that creates an erosive condition
 - On or across a cemetery or burial ground, or land used as an airport
 - Within 100 feet of a dwelling at a speed greater than the minimum speed necessary for controlled forward

movement except when operating on private property or on designated routes, trails, areas, or access routes

- On lands of another without permission
- Within 100 feet of a slide, ski, or skating area
- On a DNR–designated snowmobile trail unless it's also designated for ORV use
- On any operating or non-abandoned railroad or railroad right-of-way, or public utility right-of-way (except to cross at a designated railroad crossing)
- In or upon the waters of any stream, river, bog, wetland, marsh, or quagmire

■ ORV operation is prohibited in public hunting areas during the regular November firearm deer season, from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., except for these cases:

- Going to or from a residence or hunting camp that is inaccessible by a conventional vehicle (subject to state land regulations)
- On private property, with landowner's permission
- Passenger vehicles while being operated on roads capable of sustaining automobile traffic
- Persons holding a Permit to Hunt From a Standing Vehicle or otherwise meeting disability requirements (see "Persons With Disabilities") while engaged in hunting or fishing activity

■ An ORV may not be operated on any public highway, street, or right-of-way, except:

- To cross at right angles *after* a complete stop (not on limited-access highways)
- For ORVs also registered as motor vehicles under the Michigan Vehicle Code
- In a special event held under a government permit
- On an approved and signed MDOT ORV Connector Route

■ ORVs may be operated on a roadway in accordance with a locally enacted ordinance. ORV riders are encouraged to contact the appropriate local political subdivision to obtain ordinance specifics.

■ An ORV may not be operated:

- At a rate of speed greater than is reasonable and proper based on existing conditions.
- In a careless manner without due regard for existing conditions.
- In a manner that leaves behind litter or debris.
- To hunt, pursue, harass, or attempt to kill any animal or bird.
- While transporting a strung, uncased bow or an uncased or loaded firearm *unless*:
 - The firearm is a pistol (concealed or not) ***and...***
 - The person transporting the pistol or carrying a loaded pistol has a Concealed Pistol License or is exempt from the license requirement.
- While transporting or possessing an alcoholic beverage that is open or uncapped (seal has been broken).
- While under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance.
- While visibly impaired due to alcohol or a controlled substance.
- While transporting a passenger unless the vehicle has been designed by the manufacturer to carry passengers. Even while operating on the frozen surfaces of public waters, you may not carry passengers unless the ORV is designed for the number of people riding it.
- While the operator is under a court suspension or revocation of ORV or automobile operating rights.
- When the ORV is unlicensed and being operated on public property or on the frozen surface of public waters.

Persons With Disabilities

- A person with a disability has the same access privileges as the general public to ORV trails, forest road, and scramble areas. Maps for legal operating areas can be located on the DNR website at www.michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/orv-riding.
- ORVs can legally be used for cross-country travel to retrieve a deer if operating directly to the animal at a speed no greater than 5 mph.
- A person who due to injury, disease, amputation, or paralysis is permanently disabled and unable to walk in a hunting situation may apply for a Permit to Hunt From a Standing Vehicle. This permit allows a person to hunt and shoot from a parked motor vehicle or ORV.
- To indicate the presence of a hunter who has a Permit to Hunt From a Standing Vehicle, an orange flag may be attached to the ORV. There is no size requirement for this flag.

Getting Started

Getting to Know Your Off-Road Vehicle (ORV)

An off-road vehicle (ORV) is not a toy. It's a vehicle built primarily for off-road recreation. ORVs can provide hours of safe, enjoyable off-road riding. But ORVs also can be dangerous if you don't understand your vehicle or know proper riding procedures.

- Because there are different types of ORVs and each has its own handling characteristics, it's important for you to study your owner's manual and learn how to operate your particular vehicle. For example, most ORVs have front and rear brakes, but some have linked brakes. You need to know the correct braking techniques for your vehicle.
- Controls and their locations differ from one model to another. Learn to find each control without looking at it.



When operating an ORV, remember these facts.

- ORVs are designed primarily for off-road use.
- Operating an ORV on paved surfaces can be hazardous because of handling issues.
- Riding on paved roads is a leading cause of ORV-related fatalities.
- Only carry a passenger if your machine is designed by the manufacturer to carry another person; most are not.
- ORV operators under 16 years of age are required to possess a valid safety training certificate when operating an ORV. All operators are encouraged to attend an ORV safety training course.

Learning the Common ORV Controls

The following are some common ORV controls.

- **Throttle:** The throttle controls the flow of fuel or power to the engine.
- **Brakes:** The brakes slow or stop a moving vehicle, typically by applying pressure to the wheels.
- **Engine Stop/Kill Switch:** The engine stop/kill switch turns off a machine abruptly, especially in an emergency.

Consult your owner's manual to learn about your machine, its accessories, and controls and their locations. You should also learn how the controls work and how to properly use them.

Basic ORV Clothing

- Clothing should fit snugly but still be comfortable. It should not be too loose. Loose clothing can snag on your vehicle, vehicle chains, and other moving parts, twigs, or branches.
- Dress in layers, and wear a warm head covering under your helmet.
- Wear gloves that will keep your hands warm in cold weather and offer protection in case of a fall or a collision with passing branches.
- Wear closed-toe boots that offer protection for lower legs, ankles, and feet.
- For the best protection, manufacturers offer clothing that is specifically designed for ORV operation. The clothing provides additional protection or padding over joint areas.
- As with any outdoor winter recreation, you need clothing that will keep you warm and dry. Bear in mind that the “wind chill factor” can lower your temperature considerably. Hypothermia can occur in temperatures as high as 50° Fahrenheit.
- See “For Operators and Passengers” for helmet and eye protection requirements.

Inspecting Your ORV Before You Ride

Nothing spoils an outing faster than mechanical problems. In some cases, malfunctioning equipment also can cause injuries.

- Set the parking brake.
- Consult your owner's manual for items that may need to be lubricated, tightened, adjusted, aligned, or checked for wear.

Always Make a Pre-Ride Inspection



Key items include:

- Air filter
- Brakes
- Drive chain or drive shaft
- Engine stop switch
- Foot shifter
- Lights
- Spark arrestor/muffler
- Spark plugs
- Steering system
- Throttle
- Wheels and lug nuts

Tires

ORV tires take a lot of punishment, so maintaining the correct tire pressure is critical. Tires have a direct impact on the handling characteristics of your ORV. Refer to your owner's manual for ideal tire pressure when riding on various terrains.

Routine Maintenance

Off-road riding puts a strain on your ORV, so it's important to perform the scheduled maintenance recommended in your owner's manual. You can avoid a breakdown and possible injury.

Remember...

Your vehicle isn't ready to ride unless it has an up-to-date ORV license. See "ORV License" for details.

Additional Gear

- Mechanical problems can occur at any time, so it's wise to carry the tool kit that came with your ORV.
- You should carry some spare parts and emergency items:
 - At least 25 feet of nylon rope
 - Cell phone (may not work in remote areas)
 - Electrical and duct tape
 - Extra key
 - Extra spark plugs—worn plugs are the number-one cause of engine stalling
 - First-aid kit
 - Flashlight
 - Headlight and taillight bulbs
 - Knife
 - Sturdy tow rope or chain
 - Sunblock
 - Survival kit
- For longer trips, you should carry the following.
 - **Map and Compass:** To make sure you know where you can operate your ORV legally, get a trail map that shows the locations of designated trails and routes. Having a topographic map also will provide you with useful information for navigating terrain because these maps show the area in three dimensions. Purchase a good orienteering compass, and learn how to use it with your maps.
 - **First-Aid Kit:** Carry a first-aid kit, and take a first-aid course so that you'll know how to respond in an emergency.
 - **Survival Kit:** In addition to the items listed above, you should carry:
 - Candy bars (or other high-energy food)
 - Emergency food and water
 - Flashlight
 - Hand axe
 - Signal flares
 - Tarpaulin
 - Waterproof matches
 - **Other Useful Items:**
 - Mobile phone and a GPS
 - Radio for weather reports



Riding Your ORV

Operating Your ORV

Before operating your ORV, you should review your owner's manual to ensure you are familiar with the machine's controls, function of each control, and how to operate your vehicle. Also, before doing any serious off-road riding, you need to find a safe, unchallenging location where you can practice riding your new ORV and get comfortable operating it. The location should be large, open, flat, and free of hazards.

Adjusting Your Posture

- Correct riding posture matters. Like riding a bike, you need to shift your weight as you maneuver your ORV. Proper posture ensures that you can shift your weight quickly when necessary and reach the controls easily.
- Proper posture includes:
 - Head up and eyes looking far ahead
 - Hands firmly on the handlebars
 - Feet on the footrests, toes pointing straight ahead
- Removing one hand or foot can reduce your ability to control the ORV or could cause you to lose your balance and fall off.
- If you remove a foot from the footrest, the rear wheel could run over it, causing an injury or accident.

Using Correct Riding Techniques

Turning

Consult your manual for information on turning your ORV properly. In general, you should:

- Turn at low to medium speeds.
- Move forward on the seat and lean in the direction of the turn.
- Turn the handlebars while looking where you are turning.
- Speed up slightly as you come out of the turn.
- If an ORV starts to tip, lean your body farther into the turn and gradually reduce your speed.

**LEAN INTO
the TURN
to counteract
wheel-lift.**

**LEANING OUT
encourages
tipping.**



Riding Uphill

- Climbing hills can be dangerous if you don't follow the proper procedures described in your owner's manual. You could lose control of your ORV, or it could overturn.
- In general, you should:
 - Use good judgment. If the hill looks too steep for your ORV or your abilities, it probably is.
 - Start the climb by shifting into a lower gear. Speed up to maintain momentum.
 - Move up on the seat and lean forward, or stand and position your torso over the front wheels.
 - Keep your weight uphill and your feet on the footrests.
- If you can't see what is on or over the crest of a hill, slow down until you have a clear view.

Proper Uphill Riding Position



Riding Downhill

- Always carefully check the terrain before you start down any hill. Choose a downhill path that is as straight as possible with a minimum of obstacles.
- When going downhill, remember to:
 - Shift your weight to the rear.
 - Maintain a low speed.
 - Use a lower gear.
 - Brake gradually.
 - Look ahead.

Proper Downhill Riding Position



Traversing a Slope

- You may encounter hills that are too steep to ascend or descend in a straight line. In that case, you may be able to drive across, or traverse, the slope at an angle. However, don't attempt to traverse a slope with surfaces that are extremely slippery, rough, or loose.
- When traversing, be sure to:
 - Keep both feet firmly on the footrests.
 - Lean your upper body uphill.
 - Keep your speed steady.

Reading and Traversing Terrain

To ride safely, you need to be able to assess the terrain ahead of you and understand the capabilities of your machine.

- Stay on existing trails. Avoid dangerous terrain such as steep slopes, marshes, and swamps. Also, keep an eye out for large holes, ruts, bumps, debris, and other obstacles.
- Travel at speeds appropriate for the terrain, visibility, operating conditions, and your ability.
- Constantly scan the path ahead of you to pick the safest route around obstacles or hazards.
- Carefully approach hills, turns, and other obstacles.
- Be especially alert when traveling over unfamiliar terrain.
- Riding over boardwalks and decks can be dangerous. Such decks are often built over wetlands and can be slippery. ORV operators should cross these with extreme caution.



Riding on Different Types of Terrain

Snow

ORVs and all other wheeled vehicles are prohibited from using state snowmobile trails unless designated for ORV use.

- Ride only on firm snow or groomed trails where permitted by law. Riding on soft snow can damage the terrain.
- Watch for snow drifts. They may cause an accident or cause you to get stuck.

Sand Dunes

- Mount an antenna flag on your ORV so others can see you.
- Avoid riding on vegetation or wet sand.

Crossing Roads and Highways

- Because ORVs are designed for off-road use, they can be difficult to handle on paved surfaces. Riding on or crossing a road illegally or improperly is a leading cause of ORV rider fatalities.
- If you must cross a road, follow this safe procedure.
 - Stop at a right angle to the road.
 - Pick a crossing point where you have good visibility in both directions.
 - Bring your vehicle to a complete stop on the shoulder of the road.
 - Look both ways, and yield to oncoming traffic.
 - Proceed forward slowly because your ORV may be difficult to maneuver on pavement.
 - Drive straight across the road.

Safety Tips

- Ride with a friend or family member on another machine.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Don't operate tired.



Cars legally operate on roads.

Youth on Wheels

Note to Parents: Is Your Child Ready to Ride an ORV?

- If your child meets the age requirement (see “Operator Age Restrictions”), it’s your job to assess whether he or she is truly ready to ride.
- To make an informed decision, you must consider several factors.
 - **Physical Development:** Can your youngster sit comfortably on the ORV and reach the controls easily?
 - **Motor Skills:** Is your child’s coordination adequate for the challenge of riding an ORV?
 - **Visual Perception:** Does your child have good depth perception, peripheral vision, and the ability to judge distances?
 - **Social/Emotional Maturity:** Will your youngster understand the risks involved in riding an ORV, make good decisions to avoid accidents, and operate the ORV responsibly?

Choosing an Appropriate ORV

For your child’s safety and comfort, it is recommended that you match your child with an ORV of a size, type, and engine size that is appropriate for his or her age group.



Please see “Summary of Young Operator Regulations.”

Your Role as a Parent

You will be your child’s teacher and safety advisor, so you must be familiar with your youngster’s ORV. You will need to know the controls, handling characteristics, maintenance requirements, and proper riding techniques.

Children Are at Risk

Nationwide, children under the age of 16 are at risk of injury and death when operating an ORV. Several factors contribute to this risk.

- Lack of visual adult supervision
- **Physical Factors:** A major cause of accidents among juvenile riders is riding a machine that's too large for them to handle physically.
 - **Leg Length:** When a child stands on the footrests, the top inseam of the pants should be a minimum of three inches above the seat. While seated, the thigh should be roughly parallel to the ground.
 - **Foot Length:** A child should be able to reach the brake by rotating the foot on the footrest.
 - **Arm Length:** When seated on the machine, a child's arms should be long enough to:
 - Turn the handlebars and maintain a firm grip.
 - Operate the throttle comfortably.
 - Operate the brake lever.
 - **Strength:** A child must have the strength to operate the controls properly.
- **Perceptual, Motor, and Maturity Factors:** Most children up to age 16 are at risk when operating ORVs because they:
 - Perceive distances to be greater than what they actually are.
 - Have a shorter attention span than adults.
 - React more slowly than adults.
 - Take more risks—particularly males—and perceive less danger in those risks than adults.
 - Try to imitate more complex maneuvers of parents or older friends.

Safety Tip

Consult your owner's manual for information on the proper use of safety belts and the child safety restraints available for your model. Improper installation of a child safety restraint/seat or the carrying of a person too small to properly use safety belts can pose additional risks.

Riding Safely

Be Prepared

- Anytime you venture into off-road terrain, some risk is involved. You could become stranded because of mechanical problems; caught in unexpected, severe weather; or injured or lost.
- Environment characteristics, such as rough terrain, climate extremes, and remoteness, also increase the chance of accidents.

Before You Leave...

Tell someone where and with whom you are riding and when you will be back.

Observing the Code of Safety

- Be sure your vehicle is in good mechanical condition.
- Familiarize yourself with your vehicle by reading your owner's manual.
- Wear protective clothing suitable for the environment.
- Use a helmet and goggles to prevent injuries from twigs and road debris.
- Make sure the lights work properly and are on during operation.
- Don't remove the factory-installed air box or muffler.
- Know the terrain where you plan to ride.
- Be aware of the weather forecast, especially ice and snow conditions.
- Respect people and animals you encounter.
- Never venture out alone.
- Stay to the right on designated trails and other authorized riding areas.

Using Courteous Trail Etiquette

- Ride only where permitted.
- Be considerate of others on the trail, and keep to the right.
- Always yield to uphill traffic.
- Slow down when someone is passing you.
- Yield the right-of-way to bikes, horses, and hikers.
- Leave gates as you find them.
- Report downed trees and trail maintenance needs to land managers.
- Report illegal riding by calling or texting **1-800-292-7800**.
- Carry out what you carry in.

Protecting the Environment: Tread Lightly!

The Tread Lightly! program supports recreationists by encouraging outdoor ethics. The word “tread” helps us remember to:

Travel responsibly on roads and trails or in permitted areas.

- Stay on designated roads. Don't blaze a new trail.
- Travel only in areas open to your type of vehicle.
- Drive over obstacles to avoid widening the trail.
- Cross streams only at designated crossings.
- Comply with all signs, and respect barriers.
- Don't mix riding with alcohol or drugs.

Respect the rights of others, including private property owners and all recreational trail users, campers, and others.

- Slow down around crowds and in camping areas.
- Never cross private land without permission.
- Yield the right-of-way when you meet others on the trail.
- If you meet a horse and rider, turn off your engine.
- Stay clear of wild animals, and avoid disturbing livestock.
- Minimize noise, and avoid creating dust.

Educate yourself by obtaining travel maps and regulations from public agencies, and knowing how to use and operate your equipment safely.

- Get maps that show the area where you plan to ride.
- Learn about regulations governing off-highway vehicles (OHVs) in the area.

Avoid sensitive areas such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands, and streams. Stay on designated routes.

- Avoid sensitive habitats.
- Stay out of designated wilderness areas.

Do your part by leaving the area better than you found it, properly disposing of waste, minimizing the use of fire, avoiding the spread of invasive species, and restoring degraded areas.

- Practice minimum impact camping.
- Equip your vehicle with a spark arrestor.
- Before and after a ride, wash your vehicle to reduce the spread of invasive species.

Michigan's ORV Trails

Michigan's public ORV system offers thousands of miles of trail and route riding opportunities.

- These trails may be lightly groomed. Riders are likely to encounter narrow sand trails, rough moguls, steep hills, stumps, rocks, brush, loose surfaces, and other hazards.
- Michigan's ORV trails and routes are designed for two-way travel. Users always need to stay to the right and be alert for oncoming traffic.
 - Check with a local club or DNR office about the ORV trails in the area before going out to ride. Designated trails vary in technical difficulty, and some may not be appropriate for your level of experience.
 - Be alert at all times when riding on routes designated for other users, such as other vehicles, equestrian riders, bicyclists, or hikers. Many times, drivers of larger vehicles fail to notice smaller motorcycles and ATVs.
- To prepare for safety:
 - Always make sure your ORV is in good operating condition.
 - Check the gas level before riding. In one hour, riders can travel farther than they can walk in eight.
 - Don't forget your tools, trail maps, a first-aid kit, and a compass.
 - Always ride with a companion.
 - Keep your lights on at all times while operating your ORV.
 - Know your local emergency telephone numbers before you ride.
 - Share your riding plan with others; let them know where you are going and how long you will be gone.
- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides ORV trail maps. These maps are available on the DNR's website at www.michigan.gov/orvtrails.

NOTES



NOTES



ORV Law Information

Call or write:

**Dept. of Natural Resources
Law Enforcement Division
P.O. Box 30031
Lansing, MI 48909-7931
517-284-6000**

**TTY Hearing Impaired
711 (Michigan Relay Center)**

**Dept. of Natural Resources
Forest Resources Division
P.O. Box 30452
Lansing, MI 48909-7952
517-284-5900**

**To ensure the enjoyment
for future riders, report riding violations
by calling or texting at
1-800-292-7800**

The Michigan DNR Forest Certification Program

In recent years, forest certification has developed as a way to verify sustainable forest management. It is an outgrowth of the desire of many communities in our nation, and throughout the world, for forest managers to demonstrate responsible, healthy, and sustainable management of our forests.

Forest Certification:

- Reviews on-the-ground forest practices against standards that address environmental, social, and economic issues.
- Provides for an independent, third-party view attesting to how effectively current management maintains a forest's health and productivity.
- Periodically reverifies and recertifies after initial certification of the forest.

On May 28, 2004, Act No 125, Public Acts of 2004 was signed into law by Governor Granholm. The "Sustainable Forestry Act" required that as of January 1, 2006, the Department of Natural Resources seek and maintain forestry certification by at least one credible, non-profit, non-governmental certification program.

In December of 2005, Michigan's State Forests were certified under both the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Michigan DNR Customer Service Centers



Baraga Customer Service Center

427 US-41 North
Baraga, MI 49908
906-353-6651

Bay City Customer Service Center

3580 State Park Drive
Bay City, MI 48706
989-684-9141

Cadillac Customer Service Center

8015 Mackinaw Trail
Cadillac, MI 49601
231-775-9727

Detroit Customer Service Center

1801 Atwater Street
Detroit, MI 48207
313-396-6890

Escanaba Customer Service Center

6833 US-2, 41 & M-35
Gladstone, MI 49837
906-786-2351

Gaylord Customer Service Center

1732 West M-32
Gaylord, MI 49735
989-732-3541

Lansing Customer Service Center

4166 Legacy Parkway
Lansing, MI 48911
517-284-4720

Marquette Customer Service Center

1990 US-41 South
Marquette, MI 49855
906-228-6561

Newberry Customer Service Center

5100 State Highway M-123
Newberry, MI 49868
906-293-5131

Plainwell Customer Service Center

621 North 10th Street
Plainwell, MI 49080
269-685-6851

Roscommon Customer Service Center

8717 N. Roscommon Road
Roscommon, MI 48653
989-275-5151

Sault Ste. Marie Customer Service Center

4131 South M-129
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
906-635-6161

Traverse City Customer Service Center

2122 South M-37
Traverse City, MI 49685
231-922-5280

ORV Trail Signs

Current ORV Trail Signs

These trail signs will be replacing the signs shown on the next page. Over the next several years, you should expect to see both types of signs on Michigan trails and routes until the transition to the new signs is completed.

Route Marker



Route Marker



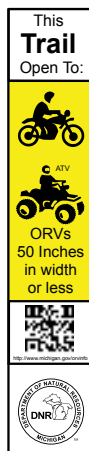
Motorcycle and All-Terrain Vehicle Route Marker



Motorcycle Trail Marker



Motorcycle and All-Terrain Vehicle Trail Marker



MCCCT Road Marker



No ORVs



MCCCT Joins Another Trail



Bridge/Culvert Marker



Old ORV Trail Signs

Michigan is in the process of phasing these signs out, but you may still see these along the trail. In case you do, you still need to obey the laws.



ORV Route Marker

- for ORVs of all sizes
- sections require DNR license unless licensed by Secretary of State



ATV Trail Marker

- for ATVs and motorcycles
- DNR license required



Michigan Cross-Country Cycle Trail Marker

- for motorcycles
- sections require DNR license and Secretary of State license



Cycle Trail Marker

- for motorcycles
- DNR license required



Directional Arrow



Mixed Traffic



Stop Sign



Stop Ahead



No Motorized Wheeled Vehicles



Stay on Trail



Private Property



License Required

ORV riders may encounter the following snowmobile trail markers on shared-use routes. Following snowmobile trail markers may lead you to unlawful areas of operation. ORVs are not permitted on snowmobile trails located on private land or on snowmobile trails located in low-lying wet areas. **Please** respect these areas and stay on marked ORV routes.

Confidence Marker



Community Route Marker



Trail Number Sign



Michigan Department of Natural Resources

To report a violation, call or text the DNR complaint line at
1-800-292-7800

Law Enforcement517-284-6000

Constitution Hall
Fourth Floor
P.O. Box 30031
Lansing, MI 48909



Parks and Recreation517-284-7275

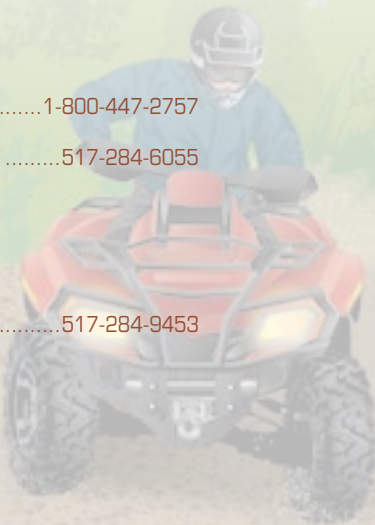
Constitution Hall
Fifth Floor
P.O. Box 30257
Lansing, MI 48909
Camping Reservations1-800-447-2757

Publication Information517-284-6055

Constitution Hall
Fourth Floor
P.O. Box 30031
Lansing, MI 48909

Wildlife517-284-9453

Constitution Hall
Fourth Floor
P.O. Box 30444
Lansing, MI 48909-7944



Visit our website:
www.michigan.gov/dnr

**Everything you want to know about what's going
on outdoors in Michigan is just a click away.**