



FAQ ABOUT ATV & UTV LAWS



Every person born after 01-01-1988 must take and pass a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) ATV safety course to legally operate an ATV or UTV on a public trail or route. Yes, this applies to people in their early 30's, it doesn't matter if you have your driver's license or not. The DNR ATV Safety course covers ATV / UTV laws and ethics.

You must be at least 16 years old and have a WI DNR ATV safety certificate to operate an ATV or UTV by yourself on any road route. 12-15 year old youths are permitted to ride ATV's (not UTV's) on a road route ONLY IF accompanied by a parent or parent approved adult. However, some municipalities have different age minimums, specific hours of operation, mandatory insurance with some even requiring a valid drivers license. Remember, it's up to the owner / rider to learn and follow municipal ordinances that sometimes differ from Wisconsin state laws.

Any person, operator or passenger under the age of 18 MUST wear a helmet that is approved from the Department of Transportation (DOT). A bicycle helmet does not qualify. If you can't find a helmet small enough for your child, they're probably too small to safely be riding on public trails or road routes.

Every occupant riding in a UTV must be seated with a seatbelt fastened in a manner prescribed by the manufacturer. No passenger can ride in or on any part of a UTV that is not designed or intended to be used by passengers. You cannot ride in the back storage box areas, sitting on someone's lap or on the roof.

Front headlights and rear taillights must be turned on, day or night, while riding on road routes. The more visible you are to other vehicles, the safer everyone is. This safety tip applies to both road routes and trail systems.

All ATV's and UTV's must display a current registration sticker on BOTH sides of the vehicle as well as on a rear facing plate. The plate must have a white background and use black text. Other details about the plate do apply.

No trail passes are required for in-state registrants. Wisconsin does have a non-resident trail pass (5 day or annual) with a single sticker requirement. The non-resident passes do not require rear facing plates.

Wisconsin has an exhaust sound level requirement (96 dB or less) designed to keep our trails and road routes quiet. Excessive sound levels annoy and curtail access, do your part.

Observe and follow all speed limits, as posted or provided in a municipal ordinance.

This is not a complete list of state ATV / UTV laws, only those that are most commonly asked about.

For more information, visit www.watva.org.

