
Wisconsin Legislative Council

ACT MEMO



Prepared by: David Moore, Senior Staff Attorney

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2021 Wisconsin Act 103 [2021 Senate Bill 364]

Operation of Snowmobiles, All-Terrain Vehicles, and Utility Terrain Vehicles

2021 Wisconsin Act 103 modifies requirements related to operating a snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle (ATV), or utility terrain vehicle (UTV) adjacent to a roadway and requirements related to snowmobile noise.

CHANGES APPLICABLE TO SNOWMOBILE OPERATION

Prior law provided that snowmobile operation adjacent to a roadway at night must conform to the direction of vehicular traffic in the nearest lane unless: (1) the snowmobile trail is located at least 40 feet from the roadway or is separated from the roadway by a head lamp barrier; and (2) the use of the snowmobile trail is approved by the Department of Transportation (DOT) with respect to snowmobiles located near or crossing state trunk highways or by the officer in charge of maintenance with respect to snowmobile trails located near or crossing other highways.

2021 Wisconsin Act 103 removes these limitations and instead allows snowmobile operation adjacent to a roadway at night that does not conform to the direction of traffic if the snowmobile is operated on a designated and marked snowmobile trail. Under the act, a person operating a snowmobile during the hours of darkness or adjacent to a roadway must dim their head lamp when an oncoming snowmobile, ATV, UTV, or motor vehicle is within 500 feet.

The act also reduces the noise level standard for snowmobile exhaust and engine noise from 88 decibels to 82 decibels and prohibits a person from operating a snowmobile that has been modified in any manner that amplifies or otherwise increases total vehicle noise above that emitted by the snowmobile as originally manufactured.

CHANGES APPLICABLE TO ATV OR UTV OPERATION

Prior law provided that ATV or UTV operation adjacent to a roadway during hours of darkness must conform to the direction of motor vehicle traffic in the nearest lane, unless: (1) the ATV route or trail is located at least 40 feet from the roadway or is separated from the roadway by a head lamp barrier; and (2) the use of the ATV route or trail is approved by DOT with respect to ATV routes or trails located near or crossing state trunk highways or by the officer in charge of maintenance with respect to ATV routes or trails located near or crossing other highways. The act removes these limitations and allows ATV or UTV operation adjacent to a roadway at night that does not conform to the direction of motor vehicle traffic if the ATV or UTV is operated on a designated and marked ATV or snowmobile trail.

Effective date: December 5, 2021

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