

Recreation Vehicle Safety Laws and Regulations for Massachusetts Forests and Parks

Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Defined

Also known as Off Highway Vehicle (OHV), ORV's are any motor vehicle designed or modified for use over unimproved terrain if used for recreation or pleasure off a public way and all legally registered motor vehicles when used off a way.

Vehicles over 1,000 lbs. such as pickup trucks or SUVs are prohibited from all trails at all times.

Registration

All ORVs must be currently registered in Massachusetts under MGL c. 90 or MGL c. 90B.

The registration plate must be displayed on the back of each vehicle.

Contact the Division of Environmental Law Enforcement for registration information: (617)626-1610 or www.mass.gov/dfwele/dle/elereg.htm

Riding Season

ORV use is permitted only during the riding season (as conditions allow) beginning **no earlier than May 1** and ending **no later than the last Sunday in November** each year. To be sure the forest is open to ORV riding, call ahead.

Age Restrictions

Under no circumstances, may a person under the age of 12 operate a recreation vehicle on state forest lands, and no person under the age of 14 shall operate a recreation vehicle except as provided below:

- A person who is **12-13 years old** **may operate if** directly **supervised** by a person who is 18 or older.
- **No person under the age of 16½ years** old shall operate a recreation vehicle across a public way.

Designated ORV Trails

ORV use is permitted only on designated ORV trails within the forest management. Designated ORV trails will be marked with trailhead signage and/or orange or yellow trail blazes. All other state parks, reservations and forests are closed to ORV use at all times.

Prohibited ORV Uses/Operations

The following are **examples of ORV uses that are not allowed**:

- **No operating on trails or in state forests not designated for ORV use.**
- **No operating on public ways** or upon the right-of-way limits of a controlled access highway - this includes all roads (dirt or paved) within state forests.
- **No operating before sunrise or after sunset** within state forest lands.
- **No operating on a wetland** such as a bog, marsh, or swamp.
- No operating in a manner so as to harass or chase wildlife or domestic animals.
- Failure to come to a complete stop when crossing a public way (ORV rider must yield to traffic).
- No operating on land of another within 150 feet of an occupied residence without owner's permission.
- No operating within 150 feet of an occupied residence without owner's permission.
- No operating so as to endanger any person or property.
- No operating at an unreasonable, improper, or unsafe speed for existing conditions.
- No operating under the influence of drugs and alcohol.
- No carrying of a firearm in or on a recreation vehicle, unless it is unloaded and in an enclosed case.
- No carrying passengers on any ORV unless manufactured for the driver and one passenger.

Safety Equipment

Persons operating or riding on a recreation vehicle shall wear an approved helmet. Each recreation vehicle must also be equipped with an adequate braking system and muffler designed to reduce unusual or excessive noise and obnoxious fumes. Each recreation vehicle must be equipped with and display after sunset, one or more headlights, a red rear light and red rear reflector.

Rider Responsibility

Observing trail etiquette and safety are important, particularly when trails are heavily used.

- ***To prevent habitat and trail damage***, slow down, stay within the trail corridor and use bridges when provided.
- ***Know where you are permitted to ride and where you are not.***
- ***Respect private property and closed areas.***
- ***Keep to the right side of the trail, and go slow*** around blind corners and through trail intersections.
- ***When passing*** hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers and other trail users, ***reduce speed, yield right-of-way***, and do not pass until it can be accomplished with complete safety.
- If you "***pack it in, pack it out***".
- Volunteer to help maintain trails and join an organized club in your area.