



# Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Laws



This pamphlet is not a complete set of ATV laws; however, it supplies the essential information. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions, contact the Department of Natural Resources or your local law enforcement authorities.

Check with local governing agencies for local ordinances.

## **The Future of ATV Riding in Wisconsin Depends On You—Ride Responsibly**

This publication is available upon request in alternate formats for visually impaired persons. Please contact (608) 266-2142 to request an alternate format.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to: Equal Opportunity Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

Department of Natural Resources Box 7921 Madison, Wisconsin 53707

For ATV and safety information, visit our web site at;

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/enforcement/safety/atved.html>

PUB-LE-500 2007

Union Street Design, LLC



---

## Contents

---

Accidents and Crashes.....	19
Age and Safety Certificate Requirements—General.....	7
Agricultural Use.....	12
Alcohol and Drugs.....	6
Clubs/organizations.....	3
Common Trail Signs.....	16
Dealer/Renter Requirements.....	18
Definitions.....	24
Disabled Operators.....	14
Enforcement, Penalties and Common Violations.....	20
Equipment Lights, Reflectors and Brakes.....	17
Exhaust and Noise Restrictions.....	18
Helmet Requirements.....	13
How do I register my ATV?.....	5
Liability of Landowners.....	20
Motorcycle Information.....	21
Non-Resident Options.....	4
Operation on and Around Waterways.....	17
Public Roadway/Highway Use.....	10
Registration Requirements.....	3
Resident Options:.....	4
Roadway Restrictions.....	13
Safety Certification and Roadway Requirements.....	9
Sanctioned Races.....	19
Speed Limits/Restrictions.....	15
Trail Patrol Ambassador.....	3
Trailer Information.....	21
Unimproved Right-of-Way/Ditchline Use.....	10
Use Of ATVs While Hunting Or Fishing.....	20
Utility Vehicles/Side by Side Vehicles.....	21
What's Considered an All-Terrain Vehicle?.....	3
Where Can I Ride My ATV?.....	14
Winter ATV Use.....	15
Wisconsin ATV Program Funding.....	23
Wisconsin DNR Offices and Validation Stations.....	28

The development and maintenance of Wisconsin's network of ATV trails is accomplished through the efforts of hundreds of ATV club members and private citizens. Their volunteer time is spent performing the crucial tasks of maintaining and preparing trails by brushing, grading, signing the trails, trail grooming and performing safety inspections.

---

## ATV clubs/organizations

---

Please consider joining an ATV club; your help is needed. By staying on the trail, you show your respect for the hard work of the local clubs and the rights of the property owners who have graciously allowed an ATV trail to cross their property.

---

## ATV Trail Patrol Ambassador

---

Consider becoming an ATV Trail Patrol Ambassador. Go to; <http://www.ridesmartwi.org/overview.htm> for more information.

---

## What's Considered an All-Terrain Vehicle?

---

According to Wisconsin Law an ATV must meet all the following specifications;

- ◆ an engine-driven device
- ◆ net weight of 900 pounds or less
- ◆ width of 48 inches or less
- ◆ has a seat designed to be straddled
- ◆ travels on 3 or more low-pressure tires
- ◆ minimum tire width of 6 inches
- ◆ rim maximum diameter of 12 inches

---

## What is not an All-Terrain Vehicle?

---

The following are NOT ATVs and cannot be operated on ATV trails or ATV Routes;

- ◆ utility-type, side by side vehicles
- ◆ 6-8 wheel amphibious vehicles
- ◆ golf carts
- ◆ go carts
- ◆ off-road motorcycles
- ◆ anything outside the ATV specifications listed above

---

## Registration Requirements

---

- ◆ All ATVs kept in Wisconsin for longer than 15 consecutive days are required to be registered in Wisconsin.
- ◆ To legally operate an ATV in Wisconsin, the ATV must display current registration decals, you must possess a Validated Receipt (see definitions) or a valid registration renewal receipt.
- ◆ Operators should carry all necessary registration cards and paperwork with them for display to a law enforcement officer upon request.

**Display**—Unless you are exempt from registration, your ATV must display current registration decals. The decals must be prominently visible on both sides of the ATV and in a position which is forward of the operator.



---

## Registration Options:

- ◆ **Public Use (Fee—\$30)**—Allows operation on any areas open to public riding, frozen surface of any waterways and on private property with permission. Valid for up to 2 years, beginning July 1 and expiring two years later on June 30th.
- ◆ **Agricultural Use (Fee—\$15)**—ATVs can be privately registered for agricultural use if they are going to be used for agricultural purposes. It does not permit operation in areas open to the public, including the frozen surfaces of any waterway. You may dual register your ATV for public use also. The Agricultural Use registration remains valid until ownership is transferred.
- ◆ **Private Use, Non-Agricultural (Fee—\$15)**—For use exclusively on private property. Remains valid until ownership is transferred.
- ◆ **Municipal Government Use (Fee—\$5)**—Used for county, city, village owned ATVs.

---

## Non-Resident Registration Options

All ATVs kept in Wisconsin for longer than 15 consecutive days are required to be registered in Wisconsin. Non-residents operating their ATVs in Wisconsin for less than 15 consecutive days must purchase an ATV Trail Pass (\$18.00) if not currently registered in Wisconsin. ATV Trail Passes are available anywhere hunting and fishing licenses are sold or through the DNR website at <https://www.wildlifelicense.com/wi/start.php> . Trail passes must be displayed in a highly visible location on the forward half of your ATV.

You must have one of the following to meet registration requirements while operating on these areas:

### Use on Public Trails

- ◆ valid ATV Trail Pass (\$18)
- ◆ Wisconsin Public Use registration

### Use on Frozen Waterways

- ◆ Wisconsin Public Use registration
- ◆ valid ATV Trail Pass
- ◆ valid out of state ATV registration

### Use on Private Property

- ◆ Wisconsin Public Use registration
- ◆ Wisconsin Private Use registration
- ◆ valid ATV Trail Pass
- ◆ valid out of state ATV registration

### Special Attention for Illinois, Michigan or other states:

Illinois and Michigan do not have an ATV registration system that is recognized in Wisconsin. You must either register your ATV in Wisconsin or purchase a valid ATV Trail Pass to legally operate in Wisconsin.

---

## How do I register my ATV?

- ◆ Renewing Expired WI Registration

If the ATV is currently registered in your name, the DNR will mail you a renewal notice. Failure to receive the renewal notice does not relieve you of the responsibility to renew the registration.

- ◆ On-Line Renewal

The renewal process may be completed on-line at;  
<https://www.recreationalvehicle.wisconsin.gov/license/dnr/app/hom>

- ◆ If you don't have a renewal notice or if your registration is already expired, you must complete an ATV registration application and have the application form validated or have your renewal notice validated *prior to operating*. You must carry your validated receipt until the new registration card and decals arrive in the mail.
- ◆ **ATV Purchased from a Wisconsin Dealer**—At the time of the sale, the Wisconsin ATV Dealer will complete an ATV registration application. Your copy of the registration application signed by the dealer is your validated receipt. You must keep the validated copy with you while operating at all times until your decal and registration certificate arrives in the mail.
- ◆ **ATV Purchased from a Private Party or Out-of-State Dealer**—You must complete an ATV registration application and have the application form validated at **any DNR Service Center** or authorized validation site prior to riding. You must carry your validated receipt while operating until your registration card and decals arrive in the mail. The seller must give you the signed certificate or a bill of sale at the time of the transaction. Also, see transfer of ownership below.

For a complete list of authorized validation sites go to  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/es/registrations/VSByCounty.htm>

### Transfer of ownership

- ◆ **ATVs Previously Registered in Wisconsin**—You must apply for transfer of ownership within 10 days after purchase. The previous owner's CURRENT registration expires 10 days after purchase. Complete an ATV registration application and have it validated. If the previous owner's registration is NOT current, you MUST apply for *transfer* of ownership, and *renew* the registration BEFORE operation. You must carry your validated receipt while operating until your registration card and decals arrive in the mail. Transfer fee: \$5, Renewal fee: \$30.
- ◆ **ATVs Not Previously Registered in Wisconsin**—You must apply for original Wisconsin registration prior to operation. To apply, you must complete an ATV registration application and have it validated. You must carry your validated receipt while operating until your registration card and decals arrive in the mail. Fee: \$30.
- ◆ **When you sell or transfer ownership** of an ATV, you must sign the registration certificate and give it to the new owner at the time of sale or transfer.

**Lost or destroyed registrations**—Apply for a duplicate(s) on a form (#9400-376) provided by the DNR. See your Local DNR Service Center for the form. Fee: \$5.

**Change of address**—Within 15 days of changing your address, you must notify the DNR in writing, stating your new address and the certificate number for the machine you own. This process is important to complete so that you receive a registration renewal notification by mail. Fee: \$0.

---

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

It is illegal to operate an ATV under the influence of alcohol or other drugs while on any property that is held open to the public (generally this means-trails, routes lakes/rivers or corridors). Being under the influence is a condition in which a person's ability to operate an ATV, because of the consumption or use of an intoxicant, is impaired to the extent that the person is less able to exercise the clear judgment and steady hand necessary to handle and control the ATV.

**No person may operate an ATV with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08% or more. However, a person can be arrested for operating under the influence with a BAC that is under 0.08%.**

**No person may operate an ATV with any detectable amount of a restricted controlled substance in their blood.**

**Don't drink and ride. This can lead to problems, injuries and sometimes death. If you do drink alcoholic beverages, wait until you're done riding for the day.**

**Implied Consent law**—You are required to provide a sample of your breath, blood or urine if an officer has probable cause to believe you are operating an ATV under the influence. By operating an ATV on areas open to the public you have automatically consented to provide a sample of your breath, blood or urine to an officer who requests the test. If you refuse to provide a breath, blood or urine sample, you will be charged with an additional violation.

---

### **General Age and Safety Certificate Requirements**

ATV safety education certification is required for all riders (residents and nonresidents) who are at least 12 years old and born on or after January 1, 1988. Safety Certifications issued from another state or province of Canada will be accepted. Riders must carry their certificate while operating.

The ATV Safety Institute (ASI) generally offers ATV safety training to ATV owners after the purchase of a new ATV. ASI certificates are not valid in Wisconsin unless they were obtained in another state or province that uses ASI as their official, state ATV safety certification program.

### **Small ATV Exception**

This exception ONLY exists for ATV operators age 11 or younger. Once the ATV operator turns age 12, they are eligible for and must complete an ATV Safety Course to continue to operate in areas open to the public. (ATV Safety Institute certificates are not valid in Wisconsin).

All of the following conditions must be met under the "Small ATV Exception":

- ◆ Operation must be on a public, off-road ATV trail ONLY. Roadway use is NOT ALLOWED even to cross a road or to operate on a roadway legally designated as an ATV Route. (Small ATVs may be towed, pushed or operated by the parent in these situations).
- ◆ The child must be accompanied (see definitions) by a parent (not an uncle, grandparent or neighbor).
- ◆ The child must be operating a registered, four-wheel ATV of 90 cc or less.
- ◆ The child must be wearing a helmet.
- ◆ Once the child turns age 12, they must complete ATV Safety to continue to operate, even if accompanied by a parent.

## Safety Certification Requirements

Registration Type	Under Age 12 Riding allowance
<p><b>Public Use</b> (For riding on areas open to the public)</p> <p><b>Accompanied:</b> means continuous verbal direction or control by the parent; not necessarily accompanied on the same machine.</p>	<p>No safety certificate is available for children under 12. However, they may operate a <b>SMALL ATV</b> only; on designated department trails and only while <b>accompanied</b> by a parent (not a brother, aunt or a friend, etc.)</p> <p><b>Children under age 12 cannot ride on the frozen surface waters of the state.</b></p> <p><b>A SMALL ATV</b> means an all-terrain vehicle that has 4 wheels and has either an engine certified by the manufacturer of no more than 90 cubic centimeters or an equivalent power unit. (A small ATV must be registered.)</p>
<p><b>Agricultural Use</b> <b>Agricultural Use:</b> Means used for an agricultural purpose; this does not include riding from your house to an agricultural area as a means of transportation only.</p>	<p>No safety certificate is available for children under age 12. However, if you are under age 12 and you are operating on lands under the management and control of your immediate family you may operate an ATV of any size without supervision or accompaniment. <b>(Important: See Agricultural Use in the Safety Certification and Roadway Requirements chart)</b></p> <p>If you are operating for agricultural purposes on someone else's land, you must be under the supervision of a person over 18.</p>
<p><b>Private Use</b> Used exclusively on private property</p>	<p>No safety certificate is available if you are under 12. However, if you are under 12 and you are operating on lands under the management and control of your immediate family, you may operate an ATV of any size without adult supervision or being accompanied.</p> <p>No person under age 12 can operate an ATV of any size on someone else's property unless it is used under the agriculture exception.</p>

Certification requirement for riders at least age 12 and born on or after January 1, 1988	Requirement for riders born before January 1, 1988
<p>If you are at least 12 and born on or after 1-1-88, you must possess a valid ATV safety certificate to operate an ATV. A valid safety certificate includes certificates issued from another state or a province of Canada.</p> <p>You must carry the certificate while operating and display it to a law enforcement officer upon request.</p> <p>ATV Safety Institute (ASI) certificates are not valid in Wisconsin unless they were obtained in a state or province that uses ASI as their official, state ATV safety certification program.</p>	<p>If you were born before January 1, 1988, certification or supervision is not required.</p> <p>However;</p> <p>You are strongly encouraged to attend a department ATV safety class and acquire a certificate.</p>
<p>If you are at least 12 and born on or after 1-1-88, you may operate an ATV for agricultural use without a certificate, unsupervised and unaccompanied on lands under the management and control of your immediate family.</p> <p>You are <b>strongly</b> encouraged to attend a safety class and acquire a certificate. <b>(Important: See Agricultural Use in the Safety Certification and Roadway Requirements chart)</b></p> <p>If you are riding on someone else's property, you must be certified.</p>	
<p>If you are at least 12 and born on or after 1-1-88, and you are operating on lands under the management and control of your immediate family; you may operate an ATV of any size without a safety certificate, adult supervision or being accompanied.</p> <p>If you are riding on someone else's property, you must be certified.</p>	

## Safety Certification and Roadway Requirements

Registration Type	Under Age 12 Road Law
<p><b>Public Use</b> (For riding on areas open to the public)</p>	
<p><b>Agricultural Use</b> <b>Agricultural Use:</b> does not include riding from your house to an agricultural area as a means of transportation only.</p>	<p>If you are under age 12, you cannot operate <b>any</b> ATV on a roadway or route under <b>any</b> circumstance.</p>
<p><b>Private Use</b></p>	

## (Be sure to check other local roadway restrictions.)

For riders at least age 12 and born on or after January 1, 1988	Riders born before January 1, 1988
<p>You must have an ATV Safety certificate to operate on roads legally open for ATV use.</p>	<p>An ATV Safety certificate is not required. You may operate on roads legally open for ATV use.</p>
<p>You may operate on roadways for agricultural purposes but you must have an ATV Safety certificate.</p>	<p>You may operate on roadways for agricultural purposes.</p>
<p>You cannot operate an ATV on highways under the private use registration.</p>	

**ATV Safety Certification** may be obtained by successfully completing a DNR sponsored ATV safety course. Volunteer instructors typically offer local courses early spring through fall.

- ✓ *ATV courses are advertised in your local newspaper at various times of the year. If you want to enroll in an ATV safety course, contact your nearest DNR Service Center or visit us on the web to find an instructor who is currently advertising a class:*

<http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/es/enforcement/safety/upcoming.htm>

A state motor vehicle driver's license is not required to operate an ATV in Wisconsin

### Public Roadway/Highway Use

- ◆ DO NOT assume that you can ride next to roads (ditchlines/right of ways) the same way snowmobilers do. This general allowances DOES NOT exist for ATV operation.
- ◆ Operation on and around public roads is highly restricted and in most cases illegal
- ◆ There is no residential access allowance that permits you to ride on a roadway from a dwelling to the nearest trail or route. You will need to haul your ATV to the nearest, legal access point.

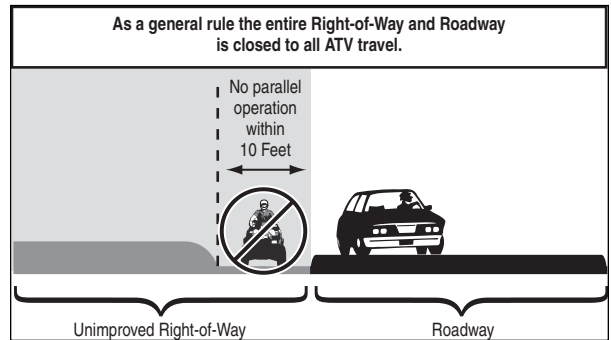
### You May Operate on Roadways in the Following Situations:

- ◆ For agricultural purposes (see page 8–9)
- ◆ On an officially designated and signed ATV Route. (see sign on page 16)
- ◆ On roads not seasonally maintained for roadway use, during the time during which no maintenance occurs and the road hasn't been closed to ATV use.
- ◆ To cross a bridge, culvert or railroad right-of-way when operating on a designated and marked ATV trail, ATV route or private property with permission if you:
  - ▲ Determine the location is safe to cross
  - ▲ Come to a complete stop and yield to all motor vehicles and pedestrians.
  - ▲ To cross a roadway while operating on a designated and marked ATV trail or private property with permission if you:
    - Cross in the most direct manner possible
    - Come to a complete stop and yield to all motor vehicles and pedestrians.

### Unimproved Right-of-Way/Ditchline Use

- ◆ Operation on the road right-of-ways or ditch lines, outside the regular traveled portion of the road, is highly restricted and in most cases illegal

- ◆ Many right-of-ways or ditch lines are privately owned, operation on private property without permission is trespassing.
- ◆ You May Operate on an Unimproved Right-of-Ways in the Following Situations:
  - ▲ Town Roads (examples: Maple Road, Hanson Lane, etc)—on designated and marked ATV trails or routes or on private property with permission.
  - ▲ County Highways—(Highway C, Highway TT, etc)—on designated and marked ATV trails or routes or on private property with permission. If operating on a trail or route running parallel to the highway, you must be at least 10 feet from the roadway portion of the highway.
  - ▲ State Highway—(Highway 8, Highway 141, etc.)—on designated and marked ATV trails or routes or on private property with permission. If operating on a trail or route running parallel to the highway, you must be at least 10 feet from the roadway portion of the highway.
  - ▲ Interstate Highway—(I-90, I-41, I-39, etc.)—no operation allowed.



**When a helmet is required**, the mandatory helmet type is one that is designed for motorcycle or ATV use. A bicycle helmet is not acceptable headgear by law.

- ✓ *Almost all of the victims involved in a fatal ATV crash did not wear a helmet. Save your own life and wear your helmet at all times while riding your ATV.*



---

## Agricultural Use

---

### Roadway Use

Agricultural roadway use of an ATV is permitted in certain situations. Use a high degree of caution when operating in or around roadways.

ATVs registered as agricultural use and being used exclusively for agricultural purposes at the time may be operated on regularly traveled portion of roadways.

- ◆ ATVs must operate at the extreme right hand side or the roadway, except for left turns.
- ◆ Headlights and taillights must be activated and visible.
- ◆ Must obey the posted speed limits.
- ◆ Must operate and 10 m.p.h. or less when within 100 feet of a pedestrian or within 150 feet of a dwelling.

✓ *ATVs registered as agricultural use may only be used in operations involving land owned or leased by the ATV owner. Farm hands or other employees are not permitted to use ATVs on a road as transportation from their house to work.*

---

## Additional Roadway Restrictions

---

### When legally operating on a roadway.

- ◆ Operate at the extreme right side of the roadway surface.
- ◆ Left turns can be made from any part of the roadway surface as long as it's safe.
- ◆ You must not exceed the route speed limit.
- ◆ You must obey specific hours or times of the year when the route is open, check locally for restrictions.
- ◆ You must slow to 10 MPH when within 150 feet of a dwelling.
- ◆ You must slow to 10 MPH when within 100 feet of a pedestrian or someone not on a motorized vehicle (horseback, bicycle, etc.)
- ◆ You must operate single file.
- ◆ You must have your head lamps and tail lamps on.

### When legally operating next to a roadway.

- ◆ You must be at least 10 feet or more from the roadway surface of U.S. numbered highways, state or county highways.
- ◆ You must travel in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic in the nearest lane, at night.
- ◆ During daylight hours, you may travel in either direction regardless of the flow of motor vehicle traffic.
- ◆ You must ride with due regard to safety and in compliance with all other laws.

Check locally for other restrictions. Local rules may exist that regulate hours, days or season of ATV operation.

---

## Helmet Requirements

---

Registration Type	Under Age 12
Public Use (For riding on areas open to the public)	If you are under age 12, a helmet is required to be worn at all times*
Agricultural Use	A helmet is not required on lands owned and controlled by your immediate family but it is <b>STRONGLY</b> encouraged
Private Use	A helmet is not required on lands owned and controlled by your immediate family but it is <b>STRONGLY</b> encouraged
Passenger Use	If circumstances (age and property use) would require you to wear a helmet as the operator, then you as the passenger must wear a helmet under similar circumstances. For example, a helmet would be required for a 12-year-old passenger while the ATV was being operated on public property.

At least 12, but under 18
You are required to wear a helmet except when traveling for the purposes of hunting or fishing.
A helmet is not required but is <b>STRONGLY</b> encouraged
A helmet is not required under age 18 if you are operating on lands under the management and control of your immediate family. However you are <b>STRONGLY</b> encouraged to wear one. If you are under 18 and riding on someone else's property you must wear a helmet unless you are traveling for the purposes of hunting or fishing.
If circumstances (age and property use) would require you to wear a helmet as the operator, then you as the passenger must wear a helmet under similar circumstances. For example, a helmet would be required for a 12-year-old passenger while the ATV was being operated on public property.

---

## Disabled Operators

---

- ◆ If you hold a Class A or Class B disabled hunting permit, you may operate an ATV on the roadway portion of a highway (not an interstate) if you are traveling for the purposes of hunting that are allowed by the permit. However, you must meet safety certificate and age restrictions if they apply.
- ◆ No off-trail/off-road operation is allowed in public hunting areas unless specifically permitted by the land manager. (Check with local, county, state and federal offices for details.)

---

## Where Can I Ride My ATV?

---

Most off-road trail riding opportunities are located on County owned land, with some also found on State and Federal lands. In most instances, ATV riding is strictly restricted to designated and marked ATV trails and routes only. Stay on the trails and routes, riding in illegal areas can close and/or restrict riding opportunities for everyone. Check with local County, State and Federal offices for special regulations.

Sources of ATV information, maps, rules, etc.:

- ◆ County Forestry Offices at <http://www.wisconsincountyforests.com/wcfa-adm.htm>
- ◆ D.N.R. website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cfa/lr/atv/atvtrails.html>
- ◆ Dept. of Tourism website at <http://www.travelwisconsin.com/ATV-ing.aspx>
- ◆ ATV club websites
- ◆ Area Chamber of Commerce

## Trails

An ATV trail is identified by small (6"x6") brown signs with the white silhouette of an ATV and orange blazer (diamond) signs. Be careful, snowmobile trails also use the orange blazer to mark the pathway of a trail. If the brown and white ATV sign is not present, then you are not allowed to ride an ATV on that trail. (See page 16)

A trail is different than a route and will generally never be on a road or in a ditch. You are only likely to be on a road involving a trail when you cross the road at marked intersections.

The county, town, city or village may designate corridors on land it controls to be used as ATV trails.

Some trails may be designated as multiple use trails. On these trails, you could encounter other traffic such as horses, motorcycles other ATVs and bike riders. You should check locally to determine specific restrictions or allowances.

- ✓ *Counties, towns, cities or villages may designate specific hours or times of the year when the trail is open or closed. Check locally for any restrictions.*

---

## Winter ATV Use

---

Snowmobile trails are *NOT* automatically open to ATV use. *In many cases it is illegal to ride an ATV on a snowmobile trail.* Violating this law threatens current and future opportunities to have joint use trails. Check locally for special ATV allowances on county snowmobile trails.

- ✓ *You must slow to 10 MPH or less when within 100 feet of an ice fishing shanty (ice shack) or person not on a snowmobile, ATV or other motorized vehicle.*

---

## Speed Limits/Restrictions

---

You must slow your ATV to **10-mph** or less;

- ◆ When you are riding within 100 feet of a person who is not on an ATV, snowmobile, motorcycle or in a motor vehicle. This includes, but is not limited to slowing for anglers, hikers, bicyclists, joggers, horses, etc. as well as for other ATV operators stopped along the trail.
- ◆ When you are riding within 100 feet of an ice fishing shanty (ice shack).
- ◆ When you are riding an ATV within 150 feet of a home or dwelling

You must obey the posted trail speed limits at all times.

- ✓ *When operating on or along roadways you must obey the posted roadway speed limits for motor vehicle traffic unless there is a specific speed limit posted for ATVs.*

## Other Restrictions

- ✓ *You must obey all regulatory signs, such as stop signs, yield signs and speed limit signs.*

- ◆ You can't operate an ATV at speeds that are unreasonable or improper.
- ◆ You can't operate an ATV in a careless manner so that it endangers a person or property.
- ◆ You can't operate an ATV on a person's private property without the permission of the owner or lessee. Failure to post the property does not give you the authority to ride there.

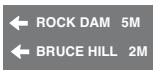
You can't allow a person to operate an ATV if they are;

- ◆ Prohibited by law.
- ◆ Has not obtained the required safety certificate (or underage).
- ◆ Incapable of operating an ATV because they are physically or mentally unable to exercise physical control over the speed or direction of an ATV.
- ◆ Under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- ✓ *You can't refuse to stop your ATV after being requested or signaled to do so by a law enforcement officer.*

## Trail Signs

Trail and Route signs are standardized across Wisconsin.

Be familiar with them before your ride. When a County, City, Village or Town creates a route, ATV route signs must be erected along with directional arrow(s), at the beginning of an all-terrain vehicle route and at locations and intervals necessary to enable all-terrain vehicle operators to follow the route. Only individuals authorized by a local municipality may post, remove or alter ATV signs. If you see a signing problem, contact the local municipality and/or ATV club representative immediately.



Trail Turns



Turn Ahead



T Intersection



Barrier



ATV Trail Sign



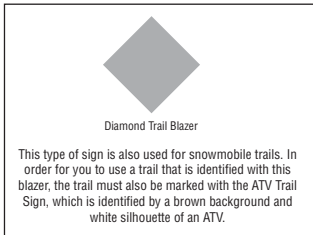
No ATVs



ATV ROUTE



S curve



Diamond Trail Blazer

This type of sign is also used for snowmobile trails. In order for you to use a trail that is identified with this blazer, the trail must also be marked with the ATV Trail Sign, which is identified by a brown background and white silhouette of an ATV.



STEEP HILL



Route Arrow



CORRIDOR 14 W

## Operation on and Around Waterways

**You can't operate an ATV in any navigable water**, or on the exposed bed of any navigable water (including exposed lakebeds in front of your property) except:

- ◆ To cross a stream by use of a bridge, culvert, ford or similar structure provided the crossing is in the most direct manner practical.
- ◆ To launch or load a boat, canoe, or other watercraft in the most direct manner practical.
- ◆ To access the frozen surfaces of any navigable waters provided the crossing or access is in the most direct manner practical.
- ◆ To operate the ATV on the frozen surface of a navigable water (public registration is required).

"Bed of a navigable water" means all of the area below the ordinary high water mark of a lake or stream. (During low-water periods, there may be several feet or more of exposed lake or streambed that is closed to ATV and other vehicular traffic.)

## Equipment—Lights, Reflectors and Brakes

Your ATV must have a **white** headlamp and a red tail lamp that is turned on during the hours of darkness or when you are riding on a highway right-of-way (routes) or when crossing roads. It is recommended that your lights stay on whenever you ride.

- ◆ Colored headlamp covers (red, yellow, blue, etc., lens covers or colored headlamp bulbs) are not legal to use when you are riding during the hours of darkness or when you are riding on a highway right-of-way (routes) or when crossing roads. Under most circumstances you cannot use colored headlamp covers.
- ◆ Your headlamp must be able to illuminate any person at a distance of 200 feet in front of the ATV.

Your ATV must be equipped with a tail light that is visible for 500 feet to the rear during the hours of darkness.

Your ATV must be equipped with at least one brake, operated either by hand or by foot.

---

## Exhaust and Noise Restrictions

Your ATV must be equipped with a functioning muffler to prevent unusual or excessive noises. No person may manufacture, sell, rent or operate an ATV in such a manner that noise emitted from the ATV is louder than 96 decibels when measured on the "A" scale when measured in the manner prescribed in the reaffirmed 1998–07, Society of Automotive Engineers Standard J1287, entitled Measurement of Exhaust Sound Levels of Stationary Motorcycles.

No one shall deny or refuse an inspection or testing of an ATV by an Law Enforcement officer who reasonably suspects a violation of an equipment requirement.

Your ATV must be equipped with a spark arrester at all times, even during the winter.

**Excessive or unusually loud ATVs are illegal and hurt Wisconsin's trail system. Do not increase your exhaust noise or operate with your exhaust system in excess of normal operation. Excessive noise threatens riding opportunities statewide.**

---

## ATV Dealer/Renter Requirements

### Dealer registration

If you are an ATV manufacturer, dealer, distributor, renter or any combination thereof and engaged in business in this state, you must register with the DNR and obtain a commercial ATV certificate. The DNR will then issue you 3 metal-reflectorized plates. You must attach one plate in a clearly visible place on each ATV that you lease, rent, offer for sale or otherwise allow to be operated as part of your business. You can purchase additional plates from the DNR. **A dealer cannot accept an ATV in trade unless the ATV is currently registered either with the DNR or another state.** Dealers cannot operate on validated applications, the ATV can only be operated legally when the reflectorized plate is attached. Commercial registrations expire every two years. Commercial Fee: \$90. Additional plate Fee: \$30

### Rental Businesses

You can't rent or lease an ATV to a person who will be operating an ATV for the first time unless you provide the person instruction on how to operate an ATV.

- ◆ You can't rent or lease an ATV to a person under 16.
- ◆ You can't rent or lease an ATV to anyone until you ascertain that all riders and operators under 18 have a helmet to use.
- ◆ All rental businesses must have clean, usable helmets available for rent to any renter under 18 or any person under 18 who will be on the rented ATV.

---

## Accidents and Crashes

**If you are involved in a crash, the first thing to do is ensure you are okay and not going to be involved in another crash from a following ATV. You must provide help to anyone else who was involved.**

Any crash that results in an injury requiring treatment by a physician or a fatal incident must be reported as soon as possible to a Conservation Warden or other law enforcement officer. You must file a written report of the incident within 10 days to the DNR. Contact your nearest DNR Service Center or sheriff's office for the accident form #4100-174.

---

## Sanctioned Races

During races, ATVs are **not** exempt from the requirements to be equipped with a spark arrester and a functioning muffler which restricts noise to 96 decibels or less.

ATVs are exempt from registration **only** if the ATV is used **exclusively** for racing on a racing facility.

During a race, parade, derby or exhibition you may ride on certain roads **only** if the road is blocked off by the county, town, city or village having jurisdiction. In addition;

- ◆ No state trunk highway or connecting highway may be blocked off for an ATV event.
- ◆ The county, town, city or village blocking the road(s) must notify the local police department and the county sheriff at least one week in advance.

If you are the sponsor conducting a sanctioned race or derby on a raceway facility, you must:

- ◆ Make provisions to keep spectators at least 100 feet away from race competitors on the frozen surfaces of public waters.
- ◆ Give notice of the race or derby to the local conservation warden or law enforcement agency having jurisdiction.

Children under the age of 12 cannot compete in races. There is no provision that allows a child of this age to ride any ATV except for the allowances listed on page 8.

A *sanctioned race* or derby means a competitive ATV event sponsored by a local unit of government, chamber of commerce, an all-terrain vehicle club, promoter, or similar organization.

A *raceway facility* means an area, including a marked warm-up and testing area, specifically designated by a sponsor for the purpose of conducting a sanctioned race or derby for which any required local permits have been obtained.

---

## Use Of ATVs While Hunting, Fishing Or Trapping

---

ATVs can be a handy piece of equipment while hunting, fishing or trapping. Remember that off-trail/off-road operation is generally not allowed on publicly owned lands, even to retrieve game. Never enter areas that have been gated, cabled, posted or otherwise restrict ATV use.

Other restrictions:

- ◆ Transported firearms must be fully unloaded and encased in a carrying case.
- ◆ Transported bows and crossbows must also be unloaded and encased in a carrying case or unstrung.
- ◆ It is illegal to drive, pursue or harass any wild animal.
- ◆ It is illegal to discharge a firearm, bow or crossbow from an ATV. (Note: Exemptions exist for certain disabled permit holders.)

---

## Liability of Landowners—895.52 Wisconsin Statutes

---

Landowners who allow ATV trails to cross their property are not required to keep the premises safe for recreational activities, to inspect the property, or to give warning of an unsafe condition, use, or activity on the property. They are generally held free of liability but there are a few requirements. If you would like to know more about this law please contact your local DNR service center.

---

## Enforcement, Penalties and Common Violations

---

Any conservation warden, officer of the state patrol or inspector, county sheriff or municipal peace officer may enforce ATV laws.

The fines for violating the ATV laws range from \$135—\$2,000. You could also face up to one year in jail. In addition, the courts may revoke your privilege to operate an ATV. The ultimate price for violating the rules is the negative effect on the image of all ATVerS. Do the right thing.

### Common Violations

Below is a list of the top violations encountered by County Sheriff Patrols and Conservation Wardens (no certain order).

- ◆ Operate ATV Without Registration
- ◆ Permit ATV Operation Without Registration
- ◆ Operate ATV in a Careless Manner
- ◆ Operate ATV While Intoxicated
- ◆ Operate ATV on Private Property Without Permission
- ◆ Illegal Operating of ATV on or Near Highways
- ◆ ATV Equipment Violations
- ◆ Fail to Display or Improper Display of Registration
- ◆ Operate at Speed That is Unreasonable or Improper
- ◆ Owner Permitting Operation by Person Under Age, or Disabled
- ◆ Operate/Ride ATV Without Head Gear
- ◆ Operate ATV on ATV Trail Without an ATV Trail Pass
- ◆ Operate ATV Without a Valid Safety Certificate/Fail to Carry Certificate

---

## Help Prevent Violations

- ◆ Always conduct a pre-ride inspection to ensure your equipment is operating properly.
- ◆ Review the ATV regulations and ask questions if you are unsure of a regulation.
- ◆ Double-check to make sure you are carrying all your required paperwork.
- ◆ Slow down, ride sober and always wear a helmet.
- ◆ Take an ATV Safety Course.

---

## Trailer Information

---

### Title

If the combined weight of a Wisconsin ATV, trailer and accessories over 3,000 pounds, you will need to title the trailer with the Wisconsin DOT and equip the trailer with brakes and brake lights.

### Trailer lighting

You cannot operate a motor vehicle or tow a trailer during the hours of darkness unless it displays the lighting equipment as prescribed in Section 347 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

### Safety chains

Safety chains are required on all towed vehicles and trailers. For further information contact the Wisconsin DOT.

---

## Motorcycle Information

---

Motorcycles are not ATVs. Check with local county officials to locate motorcycle riding areas. Under most circumstances, motorcycles are not permitted on *any* ATV trail.

Information on motorcycle trails can be found at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cfa/LR/motorcycle/offroadtrails.html>

---

## Utility Vehicles/Side by Side Vehicles

---

Utility Vehicles (UTVs) or Side by Sides do not meet the definition of an ATV. Under most circumstances these vehicles cannot be operated on a roadway or ATV trails, including ATV Routes. Check with local units of government to see if any legal riding areas exist for these vehicles.

---

## ATV Operator's Code Of Ethics

1. I will be an ethical rider. I recognize that people judge all ATV owners by my actions. I will use my influence with other ATV owners to promote exemplary conduct.
2. I will not litter trails or camping areas. I will not pollute streams or lakes.
3. I will not damage living trees, shrubs, or other natural features.
4. I will respect other people's property and rights.
5. I will lend a helping hand when I see someone in distress.
6. I will make myself and my ATV available to assist with search and rescue.
7. I will not interfere with or harass hikers, skiers, bicyclist, ice fishermen or other sportspeople. I will respect their rights to enjoy our recreation facilities.
8. I will know and obey all federal, state and local rules regulating the operation of ATVs.
9. I will not harass wildlife. I will avoid areas not posted for ATV use.
10. I will not ride off the trails or marked roads open to ATVs. I will avoid cross-country travel unless specifically authorized.

---

## Basic ATV Safety Code

1. Do not consume alcohol or take drugs prior to or during your ATV trip.
2. Use a proper size ATV helmet, goggles, or visor that is a minimum DOT certified.
3. Slow down and don't cut to the inside of the trail corners, it's dangerous and illegal.
4. If you operate an ATV at night, don't override your lights.
5. Only one person should be riding on the ATV unless specifically designed for two.
6. Know the terrain you are going to ride. If it's unfamiliar to you, ask someone who has traveled over it before.
7. Drowning is one of the causes of ATV fatalities. Always check with local sources for ice conditions. Remember: No ice is safe ice.
8. Wear sensible, protective clothing.
9. Always conduct a pre-ride inspection on your ATV to make sure it is mechanically safe and sound.
10. Know the weather forecast, especially the ice and snow conditions in the area.
11. Always completely read the Owner's Manual before operating an ATV.
13. Always use the buddy system and ride with another ATV operator.

---

## How Is the Wisconsin ATV Program Paid For

You help fund the Wisconsin ATV program. When you register your ATV or purchase a Trail Pass the fees are credited into a special account with the majority of the funds dedicated to the trail system. Other portions of the collected fees help manage law enforcement operations, the registration system, and incidentals related to running the ATV program.

In addition to the registration fees you pay, there are several other sources of revenue that are used by the ATV program.

One source of program income is derived from the state gasoline excise tax. Currently, there is a formula transfer of gasoline excise tax on 25 gallons of gasoline for every ATV registered by the end of each February. These funds are dedicated to the trails program.

Each year the Department of Natural Resources distributes the majority of the ATV trail dollars to counties and other municipalities that participate in the ATV program through a grant process. These grants reimburse counties for the cost of trail maintenance. Grants are also awarded for infrastructure improvements such as trail or bridge rehabilitation and the development of new trails or intensive use areas.

### Who is involved?

Wisconsin Conservation Wardens and sheriff patrols monitor ATV activities on trails, routes and corridors to ensure people are abiding by the rules. They offer ATVers assistance and are available to assist you with information about the trails. The Conservation Warden and deputy are your keys to keeping a healthy trail system. You can help by respecting the rules and setting a good example for others to follow.

The Off-Road Vehicle Council was created in 1986 to help guide the Department with all matters related to ATVing including the distribution of ATV trail funds to counties. The Council is made up of 7 volunteers from various parts of the state. Council members offer recommendations to the Department on legislative issues, safety concerns and sponsor funding requests.



---

## Definitions

---

**Accident**—A crash involving an ATV is any accident (regardless of the number of vehicles involved) which results in a fatality or an injury that requires medical treatment by a physician.

**Accompanied**—Subject to continuous verbal direction or control, but not necessarily on the same machine.

**Agricultural purpose**—A purpose related to beekeeping, operating commercial feedlots, dairying, egg production, floriculture, fish or fur farming, forest and game management, grazing, livestock raising, operating orchards, plant greenhouses or nurseries, poultry raising, raising grain, grass, mint or seed crops, sod farming or raising fruits, nuts, berries or vegetables.

**All-terrain vehicle (ATV)**—An engine-driven device which has a net weight of 900 pounds or less, which has a width of 48 inches or less, which is equipped with a seat designed to be straddled by the operator and which is designed to travel on 3 or more low-pressure tires. A low-pressure tire is a tire which has a minimum width of 6 inches, which is designed to be mounted on a rim with a maximum diameter of 12 inches and which is designed to be inflated with an operating pressure not to exceed 6 pounds per square inch as recommended by the manufacturer. (NOTE: the machine must meet *all* qualification restrictions.) See also: Small ATV.

**ATV Dealer**—a person engaged in the sale of all-terrain vehicles for a profit at wholesale or retail.

**Dealer**—See ATV dealer.

**DNR**—Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

**DOT**—Department of Transportation.

**Headlamp**—A major lighting device used to provide general illumination, which must display a white light of sufficient illuminating power to reveal any person, vehicle or substantial object at a distance of 200 feet ahead of the ATV.

**Highway**—All public ways and thoroughfares and bridges on the same. It includes the entire width between the boundary lines of every way open to the use of the public as a matter of right for the purpose of vehicle traffic. Generally Federal and State Highways are designated by a number. County highways are designated by a letter or letters. Town Highways are generally designated by a name.

**Hours of Darkness**—The period of time from ½ hour after sunset to ½ hour before sunrise and all other times when there is not sufficient natural light to render clearly visible any person or vehicle on a highway at a distance of 500 feet.

**Immediate Family**—Only persons who are related as spouses, as siblings or as parent and child.

**Implement of Husbandry**—A vehicle or piece of equipment or machinery designed for agricultural purposes, used exclusively in the conduct of agricultural operations and used principally off the highway, or a trailer-mounted bulk liquid fertilizer container.

**Land Under The Management And Control Of A Person's Immediate Family**—Land owned or leased by a person or a member of a person's immediate family over which the owner or lessee has management and control. This term excludes land owned or leased by an organization of which the person or a member of the person's immediate family is a member.

**Operate**—To exercise physical control over the speed or direction of an all-terrain vehicle or to physically manipulate or activate any of the controls of an all-terrain vehicle necessary to put it in motion.

**Operation**—The exercise of physical control over the speed or direction of an all-terrain vehicle or the physical manipulation or activation of any of the controls of an all-terrain vehicle necessary to put it in motion.

**Operator**—A person who operates an all-terrain vehicle, who is responsible for the operation of an all-terrain vehicle or who is supervising the operation of an all-terrain vehicle.

**Owner**—A person who has lawful possession of an all-terrain vehicle by virtue of legal title or equitable interest in the all-terrain vehicle which entitles the person to possession of the all-terrain vehicle.

**Private Property**—Land owned or leased by an individual, group of individuals or corporation (not government owned) or lands owned by a member of the immediate family (spouse, siblings, or parent). A trail even though crossing private property is not considered private for the purpose of enforcement of laws, i.e., registration, OWI etc.

**Raceway Facility**—An area, including a marked warmup and testing area, specifically designated by a sponsor for the purpose of conducting a sanctioned race or derby for which any required local permits have been obtained.

**Renter**—A person engaged in the rental or leasing of all-terrain vehicles to the public.

**Roadway**—That portion of a highway between the regularly established curb line or that portion, which is improved, designed or ordinarily used for vehicle travel excluding the berm or shoulder.

**Route**—A highway or sidewalk designated for use by ATV operators by the governmental agency having jurisdiction. Routes are identified at the beginning point by a sign showing the white silhouette of an ATV on a green background. White directional arrows on a green background show the continuation of the route.

**Sanctioned Race or Derby**—A competitive ATV event sponsored by a county, town, city or village, by a promoter, chamber of commerce, ATV club or other similar organization.

**Small All-Terrain Vehicle**—An all-terrain vehicle that has 4 wheels and that has either an engine certified by the manufacturer at not more than 90 cubic centimeters or an equivalent power unit. These machines must be registered.

**Street**—Every highway within the corporate limits of a city or village except alleys.

**Tail Lamp**—A device to designate the rear of a vehicle by a warning light which must display a red light plainly visible during darkness from a distance of 500 feet to the rear.

**Town Highway**—Roads constructed and maintained by the towns (generally these roads are signed with names, for example Old Town Road).

**Trail**—A marked corridor on public property or on private lands subject to public easement or lease, designated for use by all-terrain vehicle operators by the governmental agency having jurisdiction, but excluding roadways of highways except those roadways which are not seasonally maintained for motor vehicle traffic. Trails are identified by signs showing a white silhouette of an ATV on a brown background.

**Used Exclusively on Private Property**—Use of an ATV by its owner or a member of his or her immediate family, only on land owned or leased by the all-terrain vehicle owner or a member of his or her immediate family.

**Validated Receipt**—A copy of your *ATV Registration Application* (form 9400-376) “validated” (stamped PAID) by a DNR office/authorized validation site, or, if purchased from a Wisconsin ATV dealer, a copy of the registration application signed by the dealer, showing proof that registration has been applied for and proper fee paid.

## Invasive Plants

Help stop the spread of invasive plant species. Invasive plants can easily be transplanted along trails and roads and to other parts of the state by anyone traveling in areas inhabited by invasive plants. Invasive plants are a major threat to the survival of Wisconsin’s native plants and the wildlife that depend on them. Invasives quickly dominate areas and displace most native herbaceous species and tree seedlings.

Please take the following measures to help ensure you are not transporting invasive plant parts or seeds.:

- ◆ Stay on designated and marked ATV trails and routes.
- ◆ Cross country travel is often illegal and can put you in direct contact with invasive plant species.
- ◆ Spray off your ATV and equipment with high pressure and/or hot tap water. Some trail heads have wash stations available. If not, remove any visible vegetation from your ATV and equipment and spray off your ATV as soon as possible. Mud could easily contain invasive plant seeds.
- ◆ Clean your boots of mud and make sure your clothing is free of any possible seeds.



## Working to Make ATVing Safe: The Law Enforcement Mission

*To protect, enhance and promote the safe and wise use of our natural resources, Wisconsin Conservation Wardens shall:*

- ◆ *Ensure the right of all persons to safely use, share and enjoy Wisconsin’s natural resources through firm, fair and effective law enforcement.*
- ◆ *Educate and inform citizens of the responsible use of Wisconsin’s natural resources and the application of natural resource laws.*
- ◆ *In partnership with others, educate the public in the safe and responsible use of firearms, boats, snowmobiles and all terrain vehicles.*
- ◆ *Lead the citizens of Wisconsin in maintaining the tradition of ethical use and stewardship of our natural resource.*

This publication is available upon request in alternate formats for visually impaired persons. Please contact 608-267-7455 to request an alternate format.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to: Equal Opportunity Office, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

---

## Wisconsin DNR Offices and Registration Validation Stations

---

### DNR Central Office

Information Center, 101 S. Webster St., Madison ..... 608-266-2621

### Southeast Region

Region Headquarters—2300 N. Martin Luther King Dr., Milwaukee ..... 414-263-8500

Plymouth Office—1155 Pilgrim Rd, Plymouth. .... 920-892-8756

Sturtevant Office—9531 Rayne Rd., Suite 4, Sturtevant..... 262-884-2300

Waukesha Office—141 NW Barton St., Room 180, Waukesha ..... 262-574-2100

### South Central Region

Region Headquarters—3911 Fish Hatchery Rd., Fitchburg..... 608-275-3266

Dodgeville Office—1500 North Johns St., Dodgeville..... 608-935-3368

Horicon Office—N7725 Hwy. 28, Horicon ..... 920-387-7860

Janesville Office—2514 Morse St., Janesville ..... 608-743-4800

Poynette Office—W7303 Co. Hwy. CS, Poynette ..... 608-635-8110

### West Central Region

Region Headquarters—1300 W. Clairemont, Eau Claire..... 715-839-3700

Area Office—Eau Claire ..... 715-839-3777

Black River Falls Office—910 Hwy. 54E, Black River Falls ..... 715-284-1400

LaCrosse Office—3550 Mormon Coulee Rd., LaCrosse ..... 608-785-9000

Wisconsin Rapids Office—473 Griffith Ave., Wisconsin Rapids ..... 715-421-7800

Baldwin Office—890 Spruce St., Baldwin ..... 715-684-2914

Wausau Office—5301 Rib Mountain Rd., Wausau..... 715-359-4522

### Northern Region

Region Headquarters—810 W Maple St., Spooner ..... 715-635-2101

OR—107 Sutliff Ave., Rhinelander ..... 715-365-8900

Woodruff Office—8770 Hwy. J, Woodruff ..... 715-356-5211

Antigo Office—223 E. Steinfest Rd., Antigo..... 715-627-4317

Park Falls Office—875 S. 4th Ave., Park Falls ..... 715-762-3204

Hayward Office—10220 N. Hwy. 27, Hayward ..... 715-634-2688

Ladysmith Office—N4103 Hwy. 27, Ladysmith ..... 715-532-3911

Superior Office—1401 Tower Ave., Superior ..... 715-392-7988

Ashland Office—2501 Golf Course Rd., Ashland ..... 715 685-2900

### Northeast Region

Region Headquarters—2984 Shawano Ave., Green Bay ..... 920-662-5100

Peshtigo Office—101 N. Ogden Rd., Peshtigo ..... 715-582-5000

Oshkosh Office—625 E. County Rd. Y, Suite 700, Oshkosh..... 920-424-3050

Sturgeon Bay Office—110 S. Neenah Ave., Sturgeon Bay ..... 920-746-2860

Wautoma Office—427 E Tower Dr, Suite 100, Wautoma ..... 920-787-4686