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Teaching the ways of the trails—Developing responsible youth riders

East Lansing, Mich., December 2019—The American Council of Snowmobile Associations (ACSA) and the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) encourages snowmobiling among families, including youth riders.

“Snowmobiling is a great activity to do together as a family,” said Scott Herzog, ACSA President. “It’s very important to have all family members, especially kids, well-prepared and knowledgeable about safe snowmobiling.”

Here are some guidelines from ACSA on developing responsible youth riders:

Right ride—Accidents can happen when children aren’t riding a properly-sized snowmobile. Multiple manufacturers produce smaller vehicles with additional safety features including a high visibility whip flag for notification, easy to adjust governor to control the top speed and acceleration of the vehicle, kid-friendly controls and a removable ignition key.

Right gear—Before you let your child get on a snowmobile, make sure they are wearing properly fitting snowmobile gear that have no dangling scarves, laces or straps. It’s particularly important that their helmets are properly sized. A helmet is the most important piece of safety equipment your kids will wear this snowmobiling season, so don’t skimp on this necessary item.

Right education—Most states allow for independent snowmobile riders as young as age 10, but these young riders must complete snowmobile education safety and training classes (in a classroom or online) prior to receiving an operating license. Many manufacturers also have safety and training videos online as well. To find more information on youth riding or a schedule of snowmobile education classes, visit snowmobileinfo.org.

Right speed—Take it slow for the first few rides over various conditions for the novice rider to get used to handling a sled. Never over-ride your lights with a new rider (or anytime!), as it is unsafe and not a good lesson to impart.

“When a new rider, no matter the age, has a great first experience on a snowmobile, they will be fans of the sport for a long time,” said Herzog.

The Safe Riders! Snowmobile Safety Awareness website www.snowmobileinfo.org provides essential and detailed materials pertaining to snowmobile safety in an easy-to-understand format.

For information on snowmobile associations and clubs, visit www.snowmobilers.org.

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