

News Release  
For Immediate Release  
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UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention

### **Utah Parks and Health Departments Encourage OHV Training, Helmets**

**Salt Lake City** -- Utah State Parks and the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) are working together to promote snowmobile and off-highway vehicle (OHV) helmet use and education courses this holiday season.

“Thousands of Utahns are visiting the mountains and deserts on their own or rented snowmobiles and OHVs during the holidays,” said Eric Stucki, Utah State Parks off-highway vehicle education coordinator. “We want everyone to ride safely and know the laws and rules before you go.”

All children under 18 are required by law to wear helmets that are approved by the Department of Transportation while riding. UDPH injury prevention leaders strongly recommend that all riders wear helmets, especially parents who set the example for their children and other riders.

UDOH data show that every year, an average of 4,000 people are treated in Utah emergency rooms due to crashes on off-highway vehicles. In 2001, 182 OHV injury victims were four years old and younger, and nearly 1,400 were children ages 5-17. Stucki believes most of these injuries happen because operators are riding with a passenger, which is not only dangerous and against manufacturer specifications, but also illegal.

“Young children should never be allowed to ride on or operate an OHV or snowmobile for any reason,” said Trisha Keller, manager of the state’s Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “It is hard for parents to resist a child begging for a ride,” she said, “but off-highway vehicles aren’t toys, and they’re very dangerous for children.”

Utah law requires children ages eight to 16 to complete the Utah State Parks and Recreation’s *Know Before You Go* OHV education course before operating on public lands, roads or trails. It is illegal for any child under age eight to operate an OHV on public land.

Education classes play an important role in the prevention of injuries by teaching young riders and their parents about safe riding, weight distribution, handling, shifting, speed, and riding within your ability. Volunteer OHV Instructor Fred Christensen lost a son in an OHV accident and now instructs and encourages all youth who operate OHVs to take a class and wear a helmet.

“I know that every time I teach an OHV education class, a life is saved. I just don’t know which one,” said Christensen.

Make it your New Year’s resolution to get your children ready to ride. Classes are available in several locations across Utah and continue each week throughout the year. *Know Before You Go!* education certificates are issued to youth riding snowmobiles, OHVs and motorcycles. The curriculum includes information on safety, handling, maintenance and environmental ethics.

For more information, please contact the Utah State Parks and Recreation OHV Education office at 1-800-OHV-RIDE or visit [www.stateparks.utah.gov](http://www.stateparks.utah.gov). For information on injury prevention, call (801) 538-6864 or visit <http://health.utah.gov/cfhs/he/vipp>

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