



## News Release

**For Immediate Release:**  
Thursday, January 26, 2012

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### **Avoid Brain Injuries: Don't Forget Your Helmet**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – With the state's recent snowfall, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) wants to remind the public to stay safe as they enjoy the winter outdoors. In 2009, 440 Utahns – or more than eight people every week – were hospitalized or died from a sports or recreation-related traumatic brain injury (TBI). Ten percent of these TBIs were due to snow sports like skiing and snowboarding, sledding, ice skating, and snowmobiling.

Recent data show the top five causes of sports and recreation-related TBIs in Utah are:

1. Bicycle crashes (34.3%)
2. Off-highway vehicle/all-terrain vehicle (OHV/ATV) (24.5%), which also includes dirt bikes, dune buggies, snowmobiles, etc.
3. Horse/rodeo/large animal (13.0%)
4. Snow sports (8.6%) like skiing, snowboarding, sledding, and ice skating
5. Skateboard/in-line skates/scooter (6.8%)

When looked at more closely, the data reveal that snowboarding accounts for half (50%) of all TBIs caused by snow sports, followed by skiing (28.9%), sledding (18.4%), and ice skating (2.6%). Snowmobile crashes account for only 5.9% of all TBIs caused by OHV/ATV crashes.

Three simple steps can help keep you and your family safe this winter.

- **Wear a helmet when riding a snowmobile, skiing, snowboarding, or sledding.** A full two-thirds (66.7%) of those who suffered a TBI in 2009 during these activities were not wearing a helmet.

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- **Complete the Utah State Parks and Recreation *Know Before You Go!* snowmobile education course.** Utah law requires youth ages eight to 16 (or until they get their state-issued driver license) to complete this course before operating a snowmobile. The course costs \$30 and is available online at <http://stateparks.utah.gov/ohv/education-snowmobile>.
- **Check current avalanche danger and weather conditions before going into Utah's back-country.** Find it online at <http://utahavalanchecenter.org>.

Traumatic brain injuries can have dramatic impacts on a person's ability to lead an active, fulfilling life. Help is available for Utahns who have suffered a TBI and their families by contacting the Brain Injury Association of Utah (BIAU) at 801-716-4993 or by visiting <http://biau.org/>.

For additional data on sports and recreation-related TBIs, visit <http://health.utah.gov/vipp/traumaticBrainInjury/TBIData.html>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*