

# **Off Road Vehicle Laws, Accidents, and Safety Practices**

Scott Johnson

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Law Enforcement Division

5/19/2016

# Off Road Vehicles (ORV)

- ATV
- Four-Wheeler & Three Wheeler
- Quad
- Dirt Bike
- UTV
- Side by Side
- Snowmobile
- Snow Machine

# DNR ORV Handbook



- Distributed to help educate the public about Indiana laws governing ATVs and snowmobiles and to provide basic information about the safe operation of these vehicles.
- Online version and additional training:
- [www.offroad-ed.com/indiana](http://www.offroad-ed.com/indiana)
- [www.snowmobile-ed.com/indiana](http://www.snowmobile-ed.com/indiana)

# Indiana Laws for Off-Road Vehicles



# Enforcement

- Conservation Officers patrol rural areas to enforce ORV regulations using department issued ORV's and 4x4 Trucks and SUV's



# ORV Registration

- If you operate an ORV on public property, it must be registered. The only exception is a vehicle that is properly registered in another state and operated by a resident of that state.
- All ORVs purchased after December 31, 2003, must be registered.
- Registration is \$30 for three years.
- Registration can be completed at all Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicle (BMV) license branches. Online registration is also available at MyBMV ([www.in.gov/bmv](http://www.in.gov/bmv)).

- Upon approval of the application, the DNR will issue two registration decals and a Certificate of Registration containing the vehicle number.
- Registration decals must be attached to both sides of the forward half of the vehicle.
- The pocket-sized Certificate of Registration must be carried on the vehicle and made available for inspection by law enforcement officers.

# Registration Decal



***\* Approx. 30, 000 ORV's in Indiana \****



# Operating on Highways and Roads

- An ORV may be ridden on the public right-of-way adjacent to a public highway, except a limited access highway, when there is sufficient width to do so without endangering life or property.
- You may cross a public highway, other than a limited access highway, at a 90-degree angle to get from one area to another. To do so, you must:
  - \* Bring your vehicle to a complete stop before crossing and,
  - \* Yield to all traffic.
- Cities, towns, and counties have individual laws pertaining to ORVs. **Check these before riding.**  
*(may require helmet, insurance, restrict roads, etc.)*

# Operator Requirements

- Persons under 14 years of age may operate an ORV only if:
  - \* They are supervised by a person who is at least **18 years of age** or...
  - \* They are operating on property owned or controlled by the person's parent or guardian.
- A person may not operate an ORV on a public highway without a **valid motor vehicle driver's license.**

# ORV Safety Equipment Regulations

- An ORV may not be operated between sunset and sunrise without at least one headlight and one taillight.
- An ORV may not be operated at any time unless it has brakes capable of slowing the ORV at a rate of 14 feet per second when operating on level ground at an initial speed of 20 miles per hour.

*\*Indiana does **NOT** require operators or riders to wear a helmet.*

# Legal Operation

An individual may **NOT** operate an ORV under any of these conditions:

- While **under the influence** of alcohol, a narcotic, or other drug
- At a rate of speed greater than is reasonable or in a manner that endangers a person or property
- At a speed exceeding five miles per hour on ice covering public waters when within 100 feet of an individual on foot or within 100 feet of a fishing shanty
- Within 100 feet of a slide, ski, or skating area

- Within 100 feet of a dwelling between midnight and 6 a.m., except on your own property or as a guest on another person's property
- Without a lighted headlight and taillight when operating between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise
- Without a muffler in good working condition
- On any property **without** the consent of the landowner or tenant
- On a railroad track or its right-of-way
- On or across a cemetery or burial ground

- In a forest nursery, planting area, or public land where growing plants or animals may be damaged
- In or on a flowing river, stream, or creek, except for the purpose of crossing by the shortest possible route
- When carrying a bow with an arrow nocked
- While transporting a firearm on or in the ORV unless the firearm is:
  - \* Unloaded and ...
  - \* Securely encased or equipped with and made inoperative by a manufactured keylocked trigger-housing mechanism

*(unless the firearm is a legally possessed handgun)*

# ORV Accidents

- An operator of an ORV involved in an accident must notify the nearest law enforcement authorities as quickly as possible if the accident resulted in:
  - \* Serious injury or death of person **or** ...
  - \* Estimated property damage of \$750 or more.

# **Off-Road Vehicle and Snowmobile Fund**

- Registration and related fees for ORVs and snowmobiles are deposited in the Off-Road Vehicle and Snowmobile Fund, which is used for the enforcement, construction, and maintenance of off-road and snowmobile trails. The fund is administered by the Department of Natural Resources.







# **ATV Basics: Before You Ride**

- Because there are different types of ATVs, it's important for you to study your owner's manual and understand how to operate your particular vehicle.
- ATVs also use different transmissions, shifting mechanisms, throttle mechanisms, starting mechanisms, cooling systems, and axle designs.
- Controls and their locations also differ from one model to another. Learn to find each control without looking at it.

- ATVs are designed primarily for off-road use.
- Operating an ATV on paved surfaces can be hazardous because of handling issues.
- Riding on paved roads is a leading cause of ATV-related fatalities.
- Only carry a passenger if your machine is designed by the manufacturer to carry another person; most are not.

# Protective Clothing and Gear



# ATV helmet

- Helps prevent serious head injury.
- Should fit snugly and fasten securely.
- May be a full-face helmet or an open-face helmet plus eye protection.
- Add a stripe of reflective tape to make you more visible at night.
- Must be a U.S. Department of Transportation–approved crash helmet.





# Goggles or other eye protection



- Be aware that branches, road debris, and insects can hit your eyes and distract or even blind you.
- Do not use sunglasses, which do not provide adequate protection. Use goggles or a face shield.
- Choose high-impact eye protection that bears the marking VESC8 (or V-8) or Z87.1 or is made of hard-coated polycarbonate.
- Carry gray-tinted eye protection for bright days, yellow-tinted for overcast days, and clear for night rides.
- Make sure your eye protection is scratch-free, securely fastened, and well-ventilated to avoid fogging.

# Gloves

- Keep your hands warm in cold weather.
- Prevent soreness and fatigue.
- Offer protection during a spill or collision with branches.
- Should be padded over the knuckles for the best protection.



# Boots

- Heels prevent your feet from slipping off footrests.
- Off-road boots are best, protecting lower legs, ankles, and feet.

# Long pants and long-sleeved shirt or jacket

- Protect your skin from scratches.
- Provide the best protection with off-road riding gear that includes:
  - Pants with kneepads
  - Chest and shoulder protectors



# Things to consider.....

- Inspect your ATV prior to riding
- Tires – under or over inflated tires can change the handling characteristics of your ATV.
- Ensure that routine maintenance is conducted according to the owner's manual
- Carry a cell phone while riding
- First Aid/Survival Kit in storage compartment
- Electrical/duct tape & tool kit
- Flashlight/Firestarter
- Knife
- Tow rope
- Compass/Map

# ATV Basics: Using Correct Riding Techniques

## Turning

- Turn at low to medium speeds.
- Move forward on the seat and lean in the direction of the turn.
- Turn the handlebars while looking where you are turning.
- Speed up slightly as you come out of the turn.
- If an ORV starts to tip, lean your body farther into the turn and gradually reduce your speed.

# Riding Uphill

- Use good judgment. If the hill looks too steep for your ATV or your abilities, it probably is.
- Start the climb by shifting into a lower gear.
- Speed up to maintain momentum.
- Move up on the seat and lean forward, or stand and position your torso over the front wheels.
- Keep your weight uphill and your feet on the footrests.

# Riding Downhill

- Shift your weight to the rear.
- Maintain a low speed.
- Use a lower gear.
- Brake gradually.
- Look ahead.

# Traversing a Slope

- You may encounter hills that are too steep to ascend or descend in a straight line. In that case, you may be able to drive across, or traverse, the slope at an angle. However, don't attempt to traverse a slope with surfaces that are extremely slippery, rough, or loose.
- When traversing, be sure to:
- Keep both feet firmly on the footrests.
- Lean your upper body uphill.
- Keep your speed steady.

# **ATV Basics: Is Your Child Ready to Ride?**

- By Indiana law, a person must be at least 14 years old to ride an ATV unsupervised. If your child meets the age requirement, it's your job to assess whether he or she is truly ready to ride. To make an informed decision, you must consider several factors:



- **Physical Development:** Can your child sit comfortably on the ATV and reach the controls easily?
- **Motor Skills:** Is your child's coordination adequate for the challenge of riding an ATV?
- **Visual Perception:** Does your child have good depth perception, peripheral vision, and the ability to judge distances?
- **Social/Emotional Maturity:** Will your child understand the risks involved in riding an ATV, make good decisions to avoid accidents, and drive responsibly?

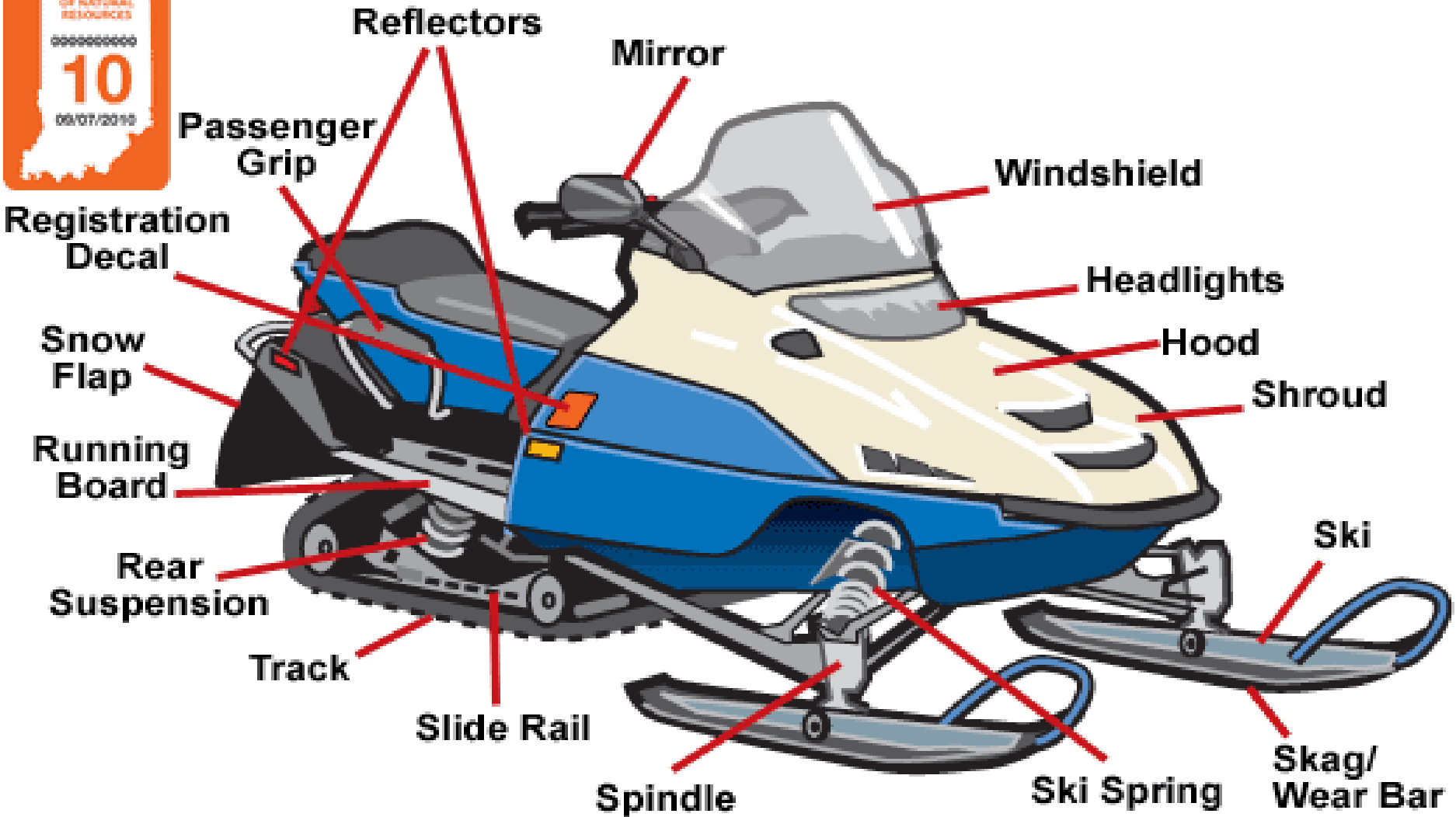
# Age and Engine Size

## Recommendations:

- Ages 6-11: Under 70cc
- Ages 12-15: 70 to 90cc
- Ages 16 and older: Over 90cc

*\*\* will vary by their height and weight*

Supervise your child during riding practice, and encourage good riding habits and appropriate behavior.



# Snowmobile Basics: Snowmobile (and ATV) Suit



# Snowmobile Basics: Riding Positions

- **Sitting:** The most common and safest position.
- **Kneeling:** A good position for resting your body at low speeds. It provides some mobility to adjust your weight.
- **Standing:** Only to be used when you need to see above obstructions ahead, such as when traveling through trees.
- **Posting:** Crouching position that allows you to absorb shocks when traveling over uneven terrain.

# Basic Riding Techniques

- **Riding Uphill:** Lean forward on the machine, preferably in a kneeling position. Apply enough speed to reach the top and don't stop until you arrive at the crest; otherwise, you might get stuck.
- **Riding Downhill:** The greatest hazard is loss of control. Stay in the sitting position and pump the brake to stop the machine. Keep the clutch engaged.
- **Traversing a Hill:** This can be difficult on hard-packed snow. Use the kneeling position. Put pressure on the uphill side of the track by leaning into the hill.
- **Stopping:** Pull over to the extreme right. Get off on the right side. Don't stop on a curve or hill.

- **Crossing a Road:** Select a crossing point that offers good visibility in both directions. Before crossing, come to a complete stop on the shoulder of the road. Look both ways and yield to any traffic on the road. Drive forward slowly because your snowmobile may be difficult to maneuver on pavement. Drive straight across, not at an angle, to minimize the distance you need to travel.

# Snowmobile Basics: Handling Special Situations

- **Deep Snow** - You need more power to operate in deep, fluffy snow than on hard-packed snow because your vehicle sinks deeper. Turn in a wide arc, and look for a firmer base.
- **Hard-Packed Snowdrifts** - Hard-packed snow presents problems in drifted areas where the packed snow isn't uniform. Unexpected bumps and dips can cause back injuries, especially at higher speeds. Travel cautiously in these areas, reducing speed.



- **Ice** - Ice is as hard as pavement and requires extreme caution. Spins are common, and fast stops are impossible. Use a slow, steady speed. To stop, let up on the throttle and allow the machine to coast to a stop.

***\*\*FIVE inches of ice is recommended for safe travel on an ORV.***

- **Getting stuck** - Ask someone for help. Use a rope to pull out the machine. Tramp down the snow in front of the machine, “rock” it free, and drive forward.

- **Carrying a Passenger or Towing** - Only carry a passenger if your machine is designed to carry another person; most are not. When towing, use a rigid tow bar, which will prevent the sled from crashing into you if you stop suddenly.

# Things to remember....

- Ensure that routine maintenance is conducted according to the owner's manual
- Carry a cell phone while riding
- First Aid/Survival Kit in storage compartment
- Electrical/duct tape & tool kit
- Flashlight/Firestarter
- Knife
- Tow rope
- Compass/Map
- Emergency Blanket
- Saw or Axe

# **Off-Road Basics:**

## **Observing the Code of Safety**

- Be sure your vehicle is in good mechanical condition.
- Familiarize yourself with your vehicle by reading your owner's manual.
- Wear protective clothing suitable for the environment.
- Use a helmet, goggles, or a face shield to prevent injuries from twigs and road debris.
- Make sure the light system works properly.
- Don't remove the factory-installed air box or muffler.
- Know the terrain where you plan to ride.
- Be aware of the weather forecast, especially ice and snow conditions.
- Respect people and animals you encounter.
- Never venture out alone.

# DNR Motorized Properties

## Legend



Snowmobile Trail



ORV property

Snowmobile Trails are  
only open from December 1  
through March 30 with  
sufficient snow.



**DNR**  
Indiana Department  
of Natural Resources



# Public & Private Properties



# Legality of Riding ATVs on County Roads

## Legend

-  ORV property
-  Snowmobile Trail
-  DNR Law Enforcement District

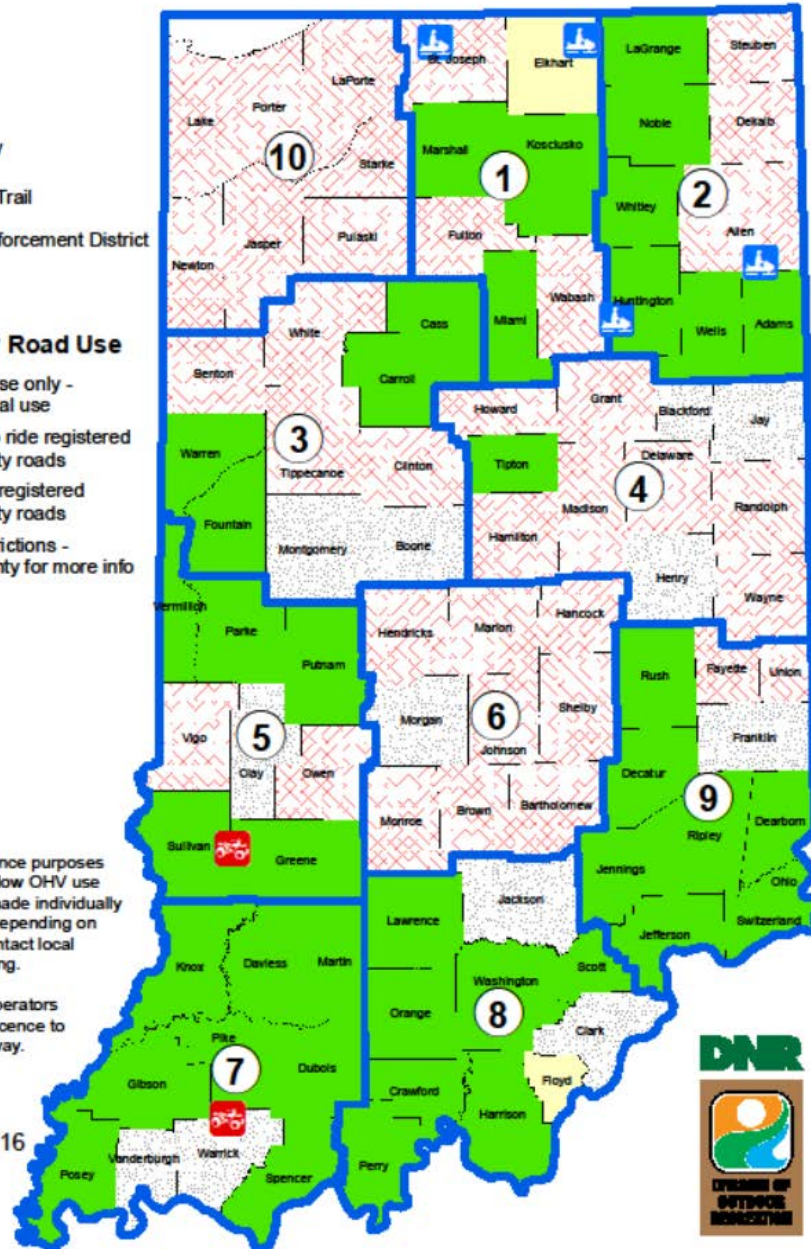
## ATV on County Road Use

-  Agricultural use only - no recreational use
-  NOT Legal to ride registered ATV on county roads
-  Legal to ride registered ATV on county roads
-  Special Restrictions - Contact County for more info

This map is for reference purposes only. The laws that allow OHV use on public roads are made individually by county, and vary depending on local laws. Please contact local authorities before riding.

State Law requires operators must have a drivers licence to operate on any roadway.

Map Date: 1-7-2016





# Learn To Ride!





# **Off-Road Vehicle Accidents**

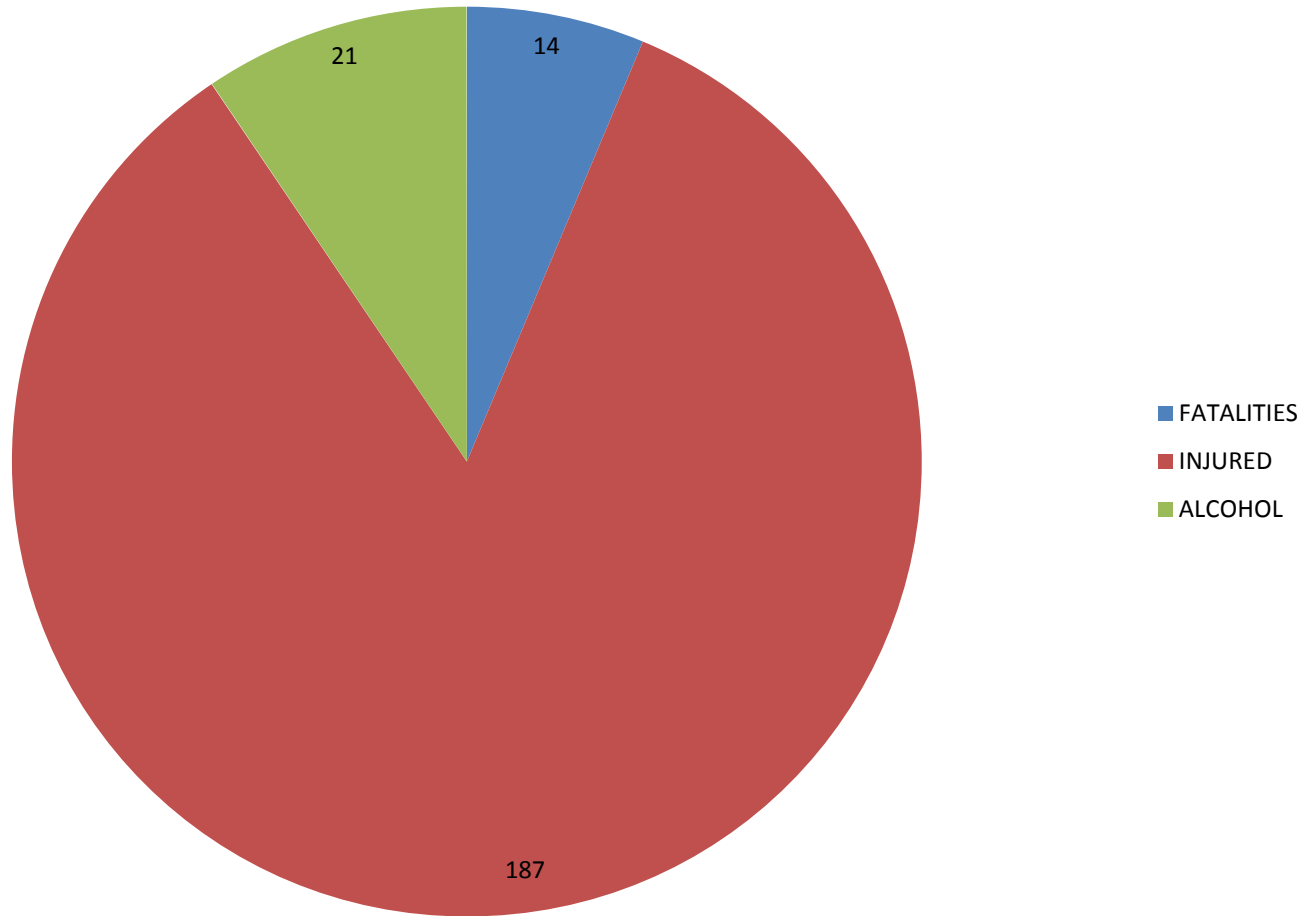






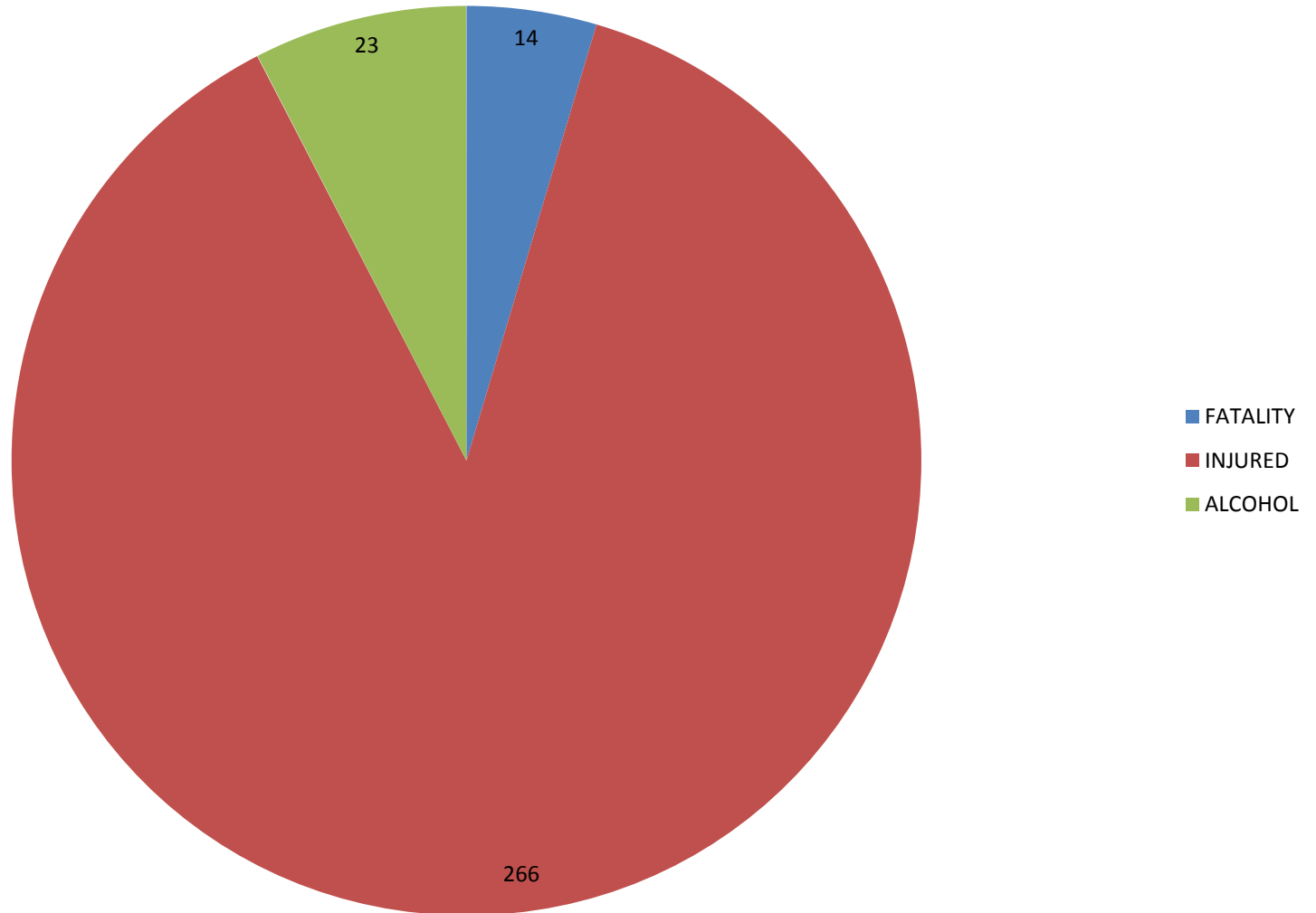
# 166 crashes

## ATV STATS 2015



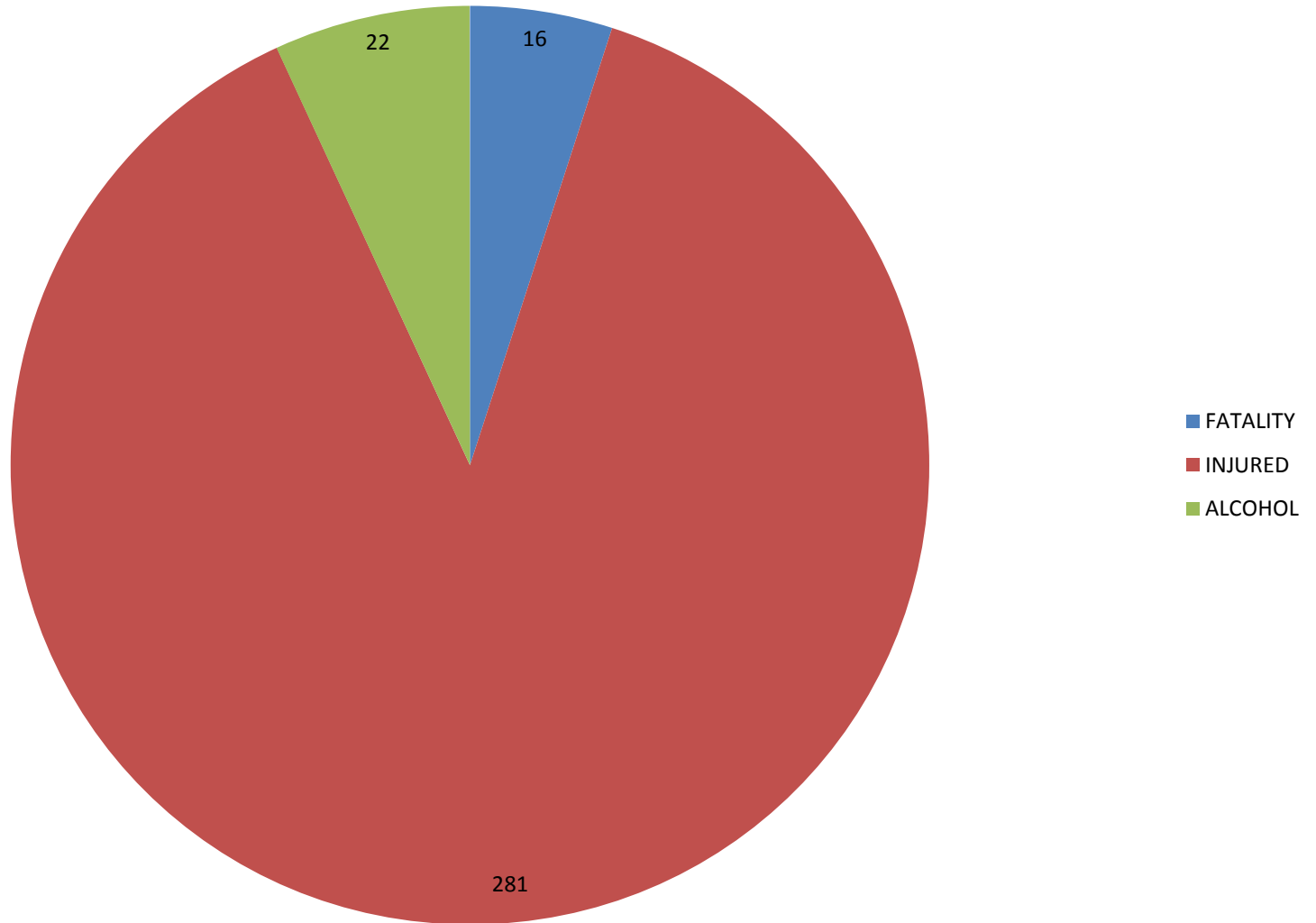
# 241 crashes

## ATV STATS 2014



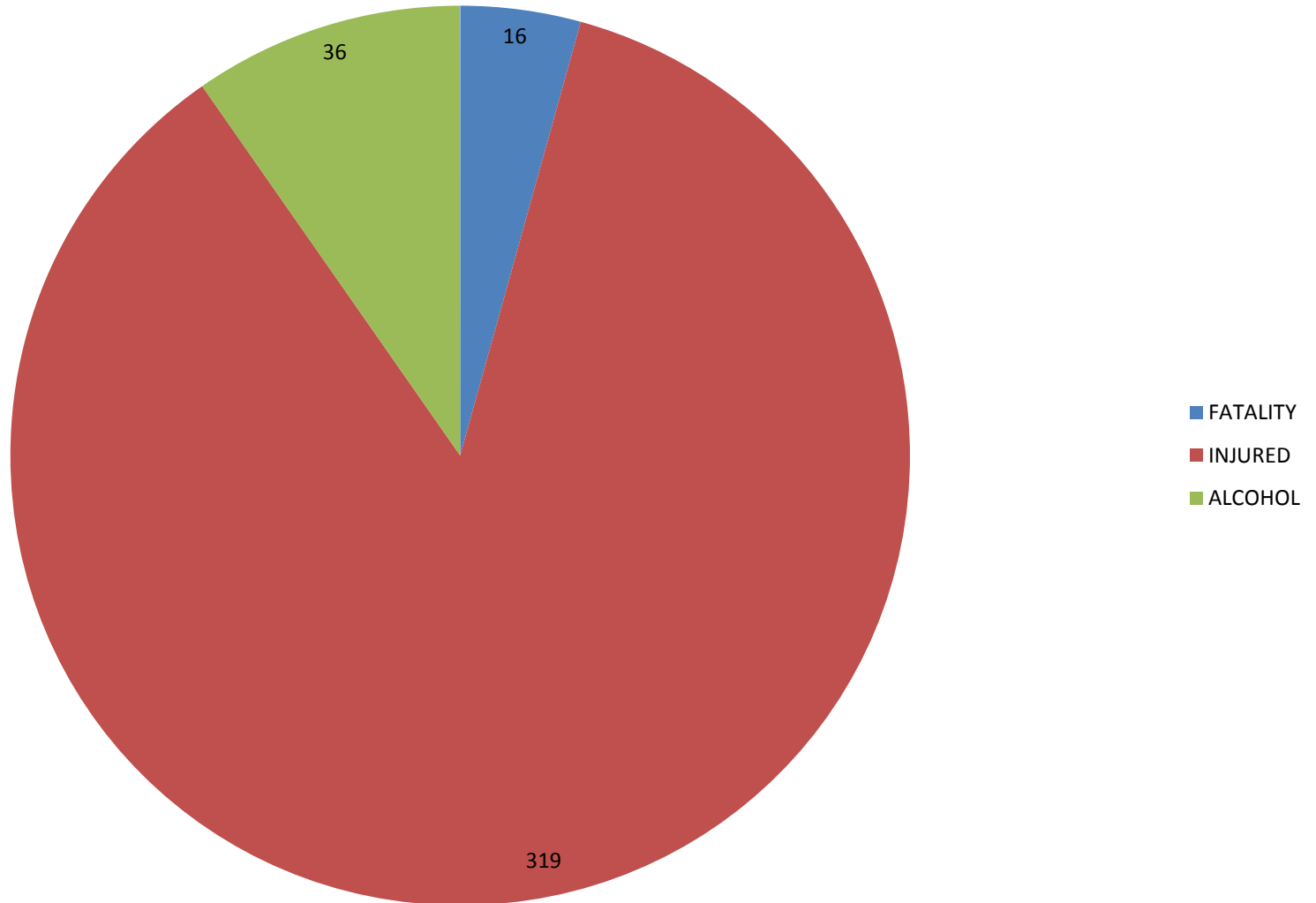
# 237 crashes

## ATV STATS 2013



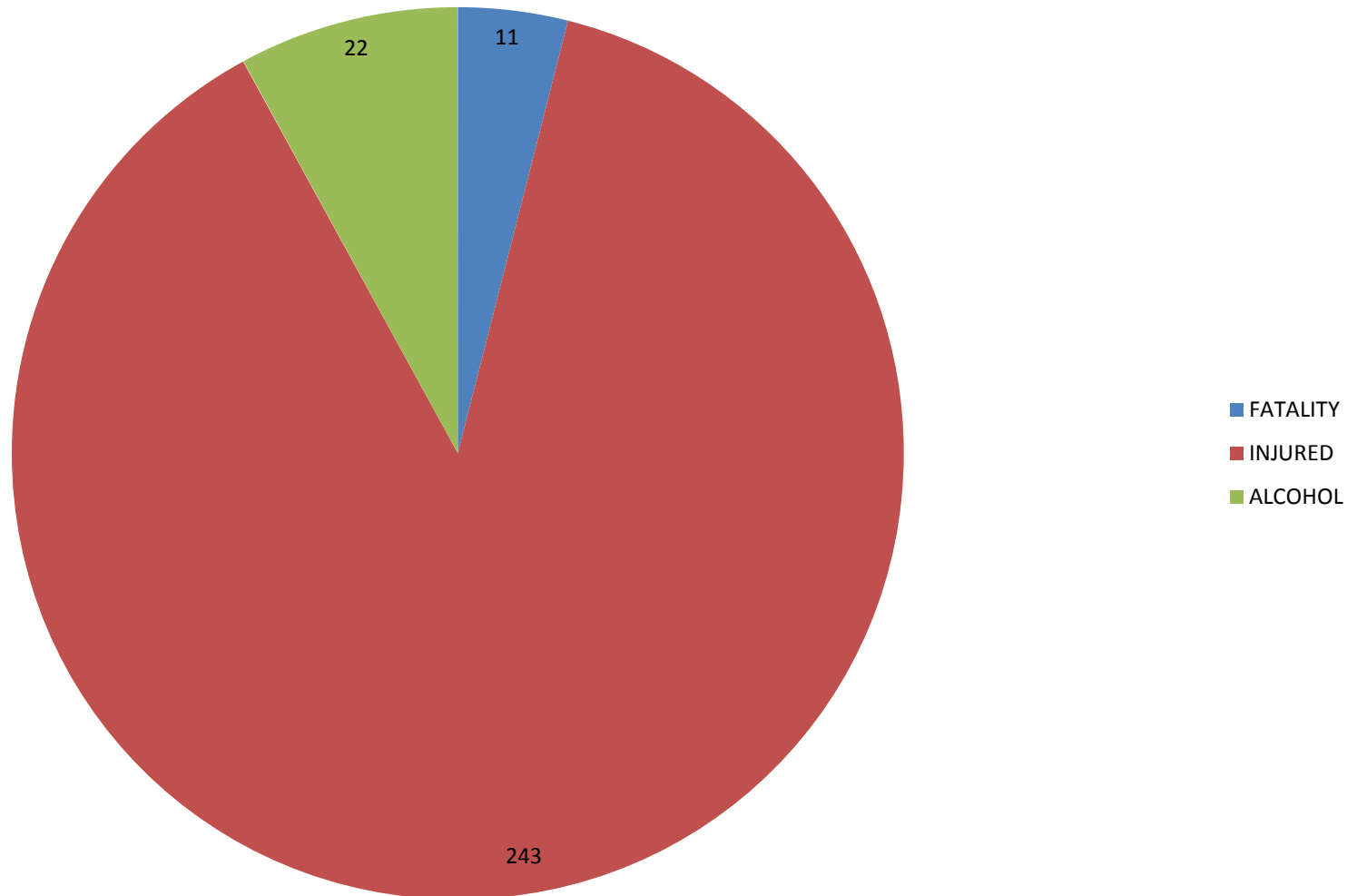
# 285 crashes

## ATV STATS 2012



# 224 crashes

## ATV STATS 2011





# Fatality Ages Under 18 yrs.

2011 <18= 3

2012 <18= 5

2013 <18= 3

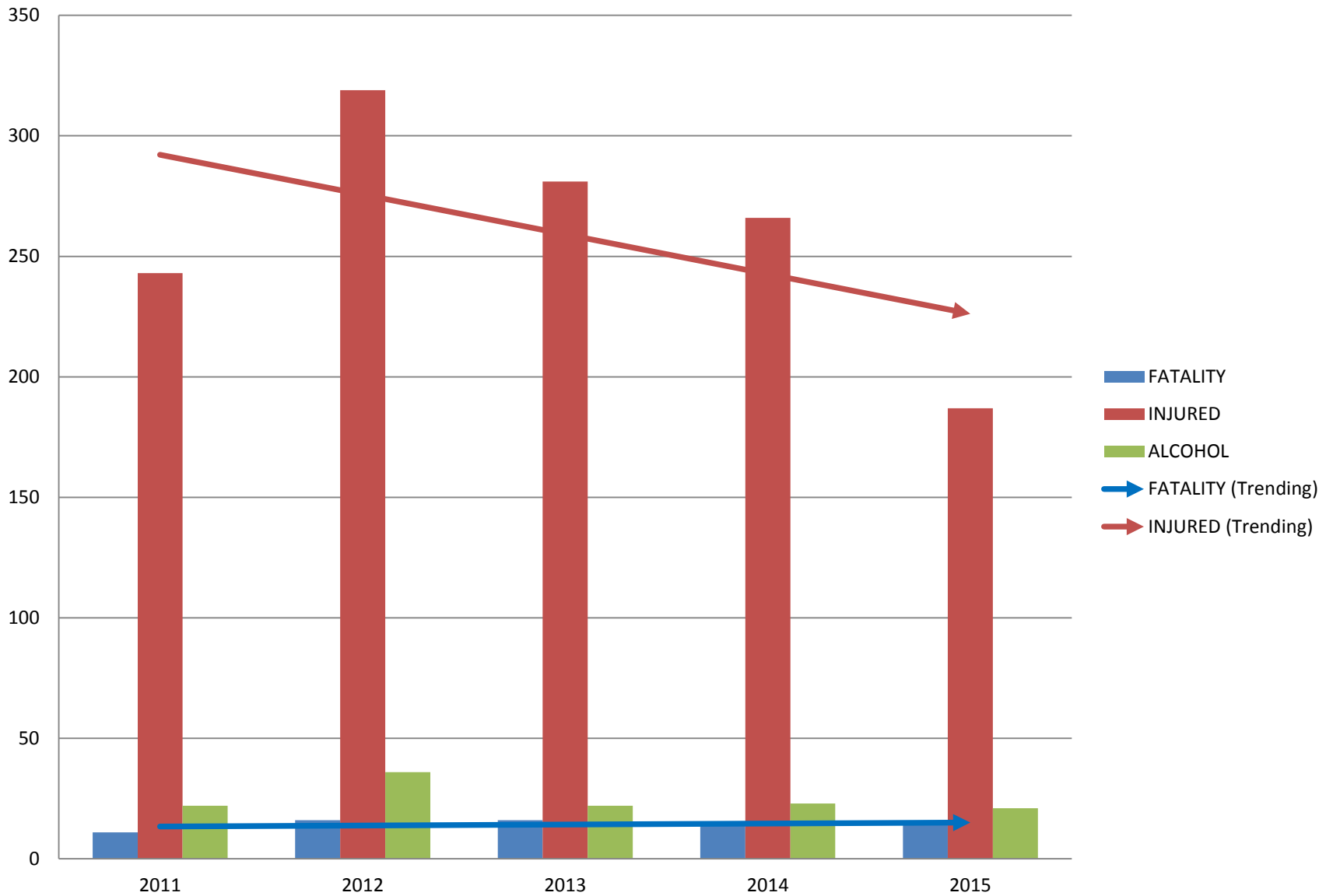
2014 <18= 7

2015 <18= 6\*

# Totals

|        | FATALITY | INJURED | ALCOHOL |
|--------|----------|---------|---------|
| • 2011 | 11       | 243     | 22      |
| • 2012 | 16       | 319     | 36      |
| • 2013 | 16       | 281     | 22      |
| • 2014 | 14       | 266     | 23      |
| • 2015 | 14       | 187     | 21      |

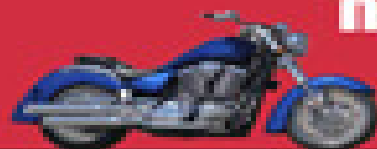
# ATV STATS TRENDING





# **DRUNK DRIVING IS DRUNK DRIVING**

**no matter what  
you drive!**



**— — — — DRIVE SAFE — — — —**



A Reminder from the American Council of Snowmobile Associations



**LEARN  
TO  
RIDE**



[www.offroad-ed.com](http://www.offroad-ed.com)

Be Safe!

Questions?