
NTDB™ data points

Winter wonderland

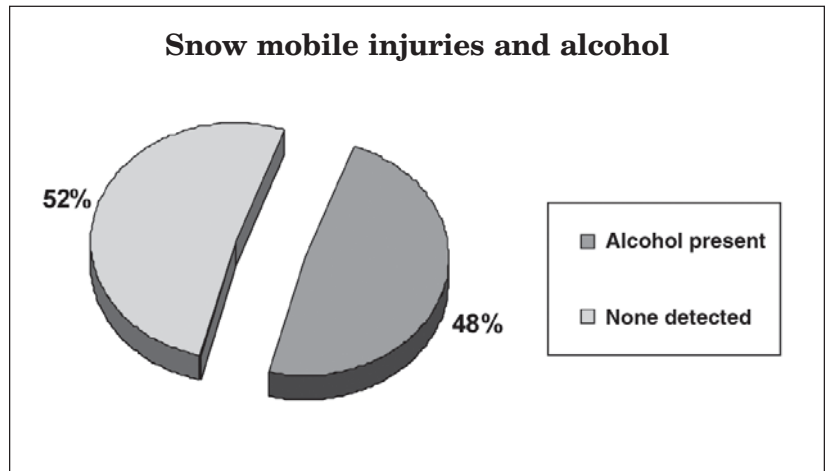
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Spring is just around the corner, but not long ago the ground was covered with snow in the midwestern and northern states. Picture the landscape dotted with green fir trees and covered with a peaceful and pure white blanket. A chill is in the air and a wintry silence abounds—a silence that is rapidly disrupted by the loud roar of motorized recreational snow craft.

Snowmobiles are gas-powered, high-performance, motorized sleds designed for traveling across snow-covered terrain. Some models are capable of traveling at speeds approaching 110 miles per hour and weigh more than 600 pounds. There are more than 1.6 million registered snowmobiles in the U.S. and over half of these are located in Michigan, Minnesota, New York, and Wisconsin. Four million snowmobilers reside in North America, and in the U.S., snowmobiling accounts for an estimated 9 billion dollars in revenue as well as more than 10,000 hospital visits annually.

In the previously mentioned states, when last call is over at the local bars, snowmobiles are the mode of transportation waiting to take home the revelers in this winter wonderland.

This behavior has the potential to transform the picturesque landscape into a winter nightmare. The mixture of alcohol, cold temperatures, high speed,



and risk-taking behavior is a formula for disaster. The once soft winter blanket becomes a rock-hard reality as the snowmobiler flips and crashes. There are close to 2,000 records of snowmobile injuries contained in the National Trauma Data Bank™ *Annual Report 2004*. It is apparent in examining the data on these injuries that almost half of the records where testing occurred indicated the presence of alcohol (see figure, above).

Evidence is lacking demonstrating the effectiveness of injury prevention strategies for snowmobile-related injuries and fatalities. However, recommendations of the committee on injury and poison prevention of the American Academy of Pediatrics, when modified to be generally applied, imply that snow-

mobile-related injury could be prevented. Prevention strategies are needed in order to stop the yearly increase in snowmobile injuries and fatalities.

For more information on snowmobile injuries and their prevention, visit the Committee on Trauma's Injury Prevention and Control Subcommittee at <http://www.facs.org/trauma/snowmobile.html> <http://www.facs.org/trauma/atv.html>.

Throughout the year, we will highlight these data through brief reports in the *Bulletin*. The full NTDB report is available on the ACS Web site as a PDF file and as a PowerPoint presentation at <http://www.ntdb.org>. If you are interested in submitting your trauma center's data, contact Melanie L. Neal, Manager, NTDB, at mneal@facs.org.