

NEW! EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2012

WISCONSIN

Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) Laws and Certain ATV Law Changes

***The All-Terrain Vehicle Laws pamphlet still applies, unless otherwise stated in this pamphlet.**



This pamphlet is not a complete set of ATV and UTV laws; however it supplies the essential information. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions, contact the Department of Natural Resources or your local law enforcement agency.

Check with local governing agencies for local ordinances that may be more restrictive than state regulations.

Department of Natural Resources, P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707

For ATV/UTV Safety Information, Visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov> and search "ATV" or "UTV"
Live Chat and Email Service Available

DNR Call Center: 1-888-936-7463 (7 am – 10 pm, seven days/week)



PUB LEA-507



Permanent UTV Laws

Introduction

On April 2, 2012 Governor Scott Walker signed a new package of UTV laws which included revisions to certain ATV laws. The DNR did not author this legislation, but is responsible for administering these new laws. The UTV Pilot Program expires on June 30, 2012 and the new laws will take effect July 1, 2012. Any UTVs registered under the previous UTV Pilot Program will be grandfathered after June 30, 2012. UTVs registered under the pilot program will continue to display their issued ATV Public Use registration decals until the expiration date has been reached. Once the UTV registration has been renewed, new UTV-specific decals will be issued.

*NOTE: UTVs must follow all other ATV laws unless specially referenced in this pamphlet. Please see the "Wisconsin All-Terrain Vehicle Laws" pamphlet for other applicable laws.

What's Different From the UTV Pilot Program?

The pilot program was temporary and allowed UTVs to register and display ATV Public Use decals only. There was no Private Use registration or trail passes. UTVs will now have UTV specific registration and decals for Public, Private, Private-Agricultural, Municipal as well as a Nonresident UTV Trail Pass. Previously only UTVs participating in the UTV Pilot program had to be registered. The new laws require all UTVs operating in Wisconsin to be registered or display a trail pass, whether on public or private property. UTVs and ATVs must now display license plates (see License Plates).

During the Pilot program, counties were required to pass a resolution in order for UTVs to operate on ATV trails and routes. Under the new law, registered UTVs are generally allowed to operate statewide. Permission is required on private lands; however Federal, State, County and Municipal units of government must officially "designate" routes and trails under their jurisdiction that are open and closed to UTVs. Contact the local government agency responsible for maintaining the route or trail to see if it has been officially "designated" as open to UTVs.

The definition of a UTV has slightly changed and other UTV specific laws have been enacted. Some ATV laws have also been modified.

What is a UTV?

Familiar UTVs may include the Yamaha Rhino, Kawasaki Mule and Polaris Ranger. A vehicle must meet all the legal UTV specifications as originally manufactured before it can be legally considered a UTV and registered. Vehicle owners who do not know if their vehicle meets the UTV specifications should contact the DNR Call Center at 1-888-936-7463.



Yamaha Rhino

Legal Specifications

"Utility terrain vehicle" means any of the following:

A motor driven device that does not meet federal motor vehicle safety standards, that is not a golf cart, low-speed vehicle, dune buggy, mini-truck, or tracked vehicle, that is designed to be used primarily off of a highway, and that has, and was originally manufactured with, all of the following:

- net weight less than 2,000 lbs
- four or more low pressure tires
- cargo box
- steering wheel
- tail light.
- brake light
- two headlights
- max width of 65 inch
- non-straddled seats for at least 2 people
- seat belts
- roll bar or similar device

The following devices do not meet the UTV or ATV definition and cannot be registered:

“Golf cart” means a vehicle in which the speed attainable in one mile does not exceed 20 miles per hour on a paved, level surface, and that is designed and intended to convey one or more persons and equipment to play the game of golf in an area designated as a golf course.

“Low-speed vehicle” means a motor vehicle that conforms to the definition and requirements for low-speed vehicles as adopted in the federal motor vehicle safety standards for low-speed vehicles under 49 CFR 571.3 (b) and 571.500. "Low-speed vehicle" does not include a golf cart.

"Mini-truck" means a motor truck, as defined in s. 340.01 (34), having a top speed of not more than 60 miles per hour, and that is all of the following:

- Powered by an internal combustion engine with a piston or rotor displacement of not less than 660 cubic centimeters.
- Not more than 60 inches wide.
- Not more than 1,600 pounds in dry, unloaded weight.
- Manufactured with a locking enclosed cab and a heated interior.

Other Vehicles Qualifying as UTVs

Certain other non-standard vehicles have been allowed to meet the UTV category include vehicles that would otherwise meet the ATV definition, except that they exceed the 900 pound maximum, may register as a UTV. An example of this type of vehicle is the Polaris Big Boss 6 wheeler. This type of vehicle is defined as:

- over 900 lbs.
- 50 inches or less width
- straddled seat
- three or more low pressure tires



Polaris Big Boss

Where may UTVs Be Operated?

UTVs may be operated wherever ATV trails, road routes, and corridors are “designated” as open to UTVs by the appropriate authority.

Federal government (U.S. Forest Service)

Designates areas open to UTVs on their Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Maps can be found at the U.S Forest Service website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/cnrf/home/?cid=stelprdb5322364&width=full>

State government (DNR)

Designates open and closed areas through signage on DNR trails and information on DNR maps, DNR specific trail websites and DNR pamphlets.

Counties, towns, cities and villages

Designates open trails and routes on their official ATV/UTV maps, trail signs, provide information on their websites and any other location where they provide ATV/UTV information to the public.

Closed areas

Any unit of government that specifically prohibits UTVs on a route, trail or corridor shall do so through posting “No UTVs” signs and public notification at trail heads, on area ATV maps, web pages and any other location ATV trail information is provided.

Exception: The U.S. Forest Service shall only be required to designate trails as opened or closed to UTVs on their official Motor Vehicle Use Maps.



Registration Options

Any current registration decals will be honored until their expiration date is reached. The following registration options are available for UTVs and ATVs:

- **Public Use** – Allows operation on any areas open to public riding, frozen surface of any waters of the state and on private property with permission. Valid for up to 2 years, beginning April 1 and expiring two years later on March 31. (NOTE: New expiration date.)
- **Private Use, Agricultural** – Allows private registration for agricultural use if the UTV is used for an agricultural purpose. Agricultural purpose includes a purpose related to the transportation of farm implements, equipment, supplies, or products on a farm or between farms. It permits certain operation on public roads (see “Agricultural Use”), but does not allow operation on public frozen waterways or public lands open to UTVs or ATVs. Owners may dual register their UTVs and ATVs for public use also. This type of registration remains valid until ownership is transferred.
- **Private Use, Non-Agricultural** – For use exclusively on private property (used ONLY on lands owned by the owner or an immediate family member). Owners may dual register their UTVs and ATVs for public use also. This type of registration remains valid until ownership is transferred.

- Municipal Government Use – Used for county, city, and village owned UTVs and ATVs. Valid for up to 2 years, beginning April 1 and expiring two years later on March 31.
- Commercial Certificate – all UTV and ATV manufacturers, dealers, distributors, renters or any combination thereof, engaged in business in Wisconsin shall obtain a Commercial certificate. Commercial certificates include three decals. Commercial decals must be displayed on a sign or plate that is removable and temporarily but firmly mounted to the UTV or ATV in a clearly visible location. Valid for up to 2 years, beginning April 1 and expiring two years later on March 31. The reflectorized, metal Commercial plates will no longer be issued.

How do I Register my UTV?

UTVs may be registered in the same fashion as ATVs. There are three ways to register or renew your UTV:

- Online - Registering or renewing online is a secure, easy and convenient method to register your recreational vehicle. Online registration allows you to process UTV transactions for the vehicle you currently own, or to register recently purchased vehicles.
- Agents - Locate an agent near you to complete your registration needs. Registration agents can process UTV registrations, including renewals, transfers, originals and print replacement decals.
- By mail - After completing all requested information on the application form, make a photocopy, and mail the original application and appropriate fees to the address provided on the form.
 - ATV/UTV Registration Application Form 9400-376 [PDF] - To operate you must display current registration or carry a temporary operating receipt.

Free Registration Weekend

Beginning in 2013, all ATVs and UTVs will be exempt from registration or trail pass requirements during the first full weekend in June.

Registration Late Fee

ATV and UTV owners failing to renew their registrations prior to the expiration date will be charged an additional \$5.00 late registration fee unless the renewal is included with an application to transfer the registration certificate.

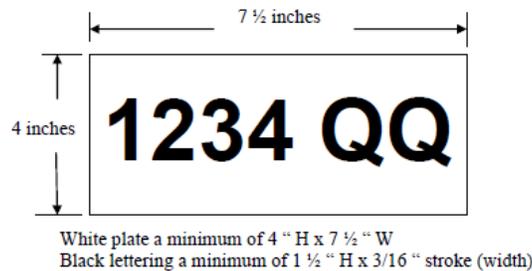
Accidents and Crashes

Any UTV crash that results in an injury requiring treatment by a physician or a fatal incident must be immediately reported to a conservation warden or law enforcement office. The operator(s), if applicable, must file a written report (Form #4100-174) to the DNR within 10 days.

License Plate Requirement

All UTVs and ATVs required to register for public use shall have a plate attached to the rear of the vehicle. The plate must be made or purchased by the owner, and will not be provided by the DNR. The plate shall be a minimum of 4 inches in height and a minimum of 7 1/2 inches in width. The plate shall be white and shall display, in black letters/numbers, the four number and two letter registration ID number for the all-terrain vehicle or utility terrain vehicle issued by the Department. The registration ID numbers shall be a minimum of 1 1/2 inches in height, and a minimum of a 3/16 inch stroke (width). The person required to register the all-terrain vehicle or utility terrain vehicle

shall maintain the plate in legible condition. In addition to the plate, Public Use registration decals must be affixed to each side of the vehicle in a place that is forward of the operator and clearly visible. The minimum 4 inch by 7 ½ inch area must be white and must only contain the required registration ID characters. Plates may be larger than the minimum size listed and the area outside the minimum area may contain other graphics or colors. The registration ID numbers are located on the registration decals.



UTV Non-Resident Trail Pass Requirement

All UTVs and ATVs operating on a public ATV trail or corridor must permanently affix and display a valid Trail Pass forward of the operator in a highly visible location. UTVs and ATVs registered by Wisconsin DNR for public, municipal or commercial use and displaying decals and license plates are not required to have or display a trail pass.

UTV Safety Certification Requirement

ATV safety education certification is required for all UTV operators (residents and non-residents) who are at least 16 years of age and born on or after January 1, 1988. Safety certifications issued from another state or province of Canada will be honored. Operators must carry their certificates while operating.

Exceptions: Safety certification is not required for UTV operation exclusively on land under the management and control of the person's immediate family or for agricultural purposes. If operated for agricultural purposes, the underage operator must be under the supervision of a person over 18 years of age. Supervision does not require that the person under 16 years of age be subject to continuous direction or control by the person over 18 years of age. This includes agricultural use on roadways.

Illegal UTV Passengers

It is illegal for a passenger to ride in or on any part of a UTV that is not originally designed or intended by the manufacturer to be used by passengers. It is not legal to operate with passengers in any aftermarket seating placed in the cargo area of a UTV.

Where do these laws apply?

Statewide, the same as ATVs.

Agricultural Use

The definition of "agricultural purpose" has greatly changed for ATVs and UTVs. ATVs and UTVs registered for Private Agricultural use may operate on roadways for agricultural purposes. Agricultural purpose now only includes a purpose related to the transportation of farm implements, equipment, supplies, or products on a farm or between farms.

Firearms and Bow Transportation

Firearms may not be transported in or on an ATV or UTV unless the firearm is unloaded, except that handguns may be loaded.

If the ATV or UTV is stationary, a loaded firearm may be placed against or on top of the exterior parts of the vehicle, but not inside any part of the vehicle.

Bows may not have an arrow nocked and crossbows must be unloaded and may not be cocked unless they are fully enclosed in a carrying case.

Nighttime Operation Adjacent to Roadways

On approved trails and routes, ATVs and UTVs must operate in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic in the nearest lane unless the trail or route is located at least 40 feet from the roadway or separated by a headlight barrier. During daylight hours, operation may be in either direction. If you are legally operating on a roadway, you must go the same direction of traffic at all times.

Absolute Sobriety

ATV/UTV operators may not have any alcohol in their system if they are under age 21. Operators age 21 or older may not be intoxicated, but are encouraged to practice "Zero Alcohol" and not consume alcoholic beverages until they are done operating all motorized vehicles for the day.

Misc. Requirements

- Electric ATVs and UTVs do not have sound level or spark arrestor requirements.
- No person may operate a UTV unless each passenger has their seat belt properly fastened.

Frequently Asked Questions

My machine meets all the specifications except for a few. Is there anyway I can register it as a UTV?

Unfortunately not, UTVs have specific, legal specifications and the machine must meet ALL of them.

The municipality where I work has used a UTV for maintenance for years. Is this UTV now required to be registered with the DNR and display a license plate?

If it meets the legal UTV definition, yes. The UTV must be registered with Municipal/Other UTV registration and display a license plate. UTVs used for law enforcement or emergency purposes are exempt from the registration and license plate requirements.

Does this mean I have to get a new license plate every time I get new decals?

No. Your plate number remains unchanged, each time you renew your decals. Registration numbers are assigned to the vehicle and will remain the same even if ownership changes.

Can I make my own license plate or do I have to purchase one?

Either way is acceptable. You may make your own as long as it meets the legal specifications. If you wish to purchase one you should check with dealerships, the WI ATV Assoc. website or search the internet.

Can I modify my machine to meet the UTV specifications?

No. Your machine must meet the UTV specifications as originally manufactured.

My son is age 14 and has passed ATV Safety, can he operate a UTV?

No. The minimum age to operate a UTV is 16 except on private property or while being used for agricultural purposes and under the supervision of a person age 18 or older.

Can I display my ATV club's name on the border of my license plate?

As long as the minimum 4 inch by 7 ½ inch area displaying the required registration ID characters is unobstructed, you may display whatever graphics you want outside of that area.

How do I know if ATV Routes and ATV Trails in a particular area are open to UTVs?

You must check with the village, city, town, county, state or federal agency responsible for maintaining the trail or route. Once the UTV program becomes established, most ATV/UTV trail maps, websites, trail heads, signs and other sources of information will be updated with information regarding designated ATV and UTV trails and routes. Any ATV Routes and trails where UTVs are not permitted to operate must be posted with "No UTV" signs.

If I don't take my UTV off of private property, do I have to register it and display a license plate?

All UTVs owned and kept in Wisconsin must be registered. UTVs used exclusively on private property must be registered with the DNR with a one-time, Private Use registration fee. UTVs registered for Private Use do not have to display a license plate.

If I have a privately registered UTV/ATV, do I have to display a license plate?

No. Only UTVs and ATVs registered for Public Use are required to display a license plate.

If I have a trail pass, do I have to display a license plate?

No. Only UTVs and ATVs registered for Public Use are required to display a license plate.

How do I know if the vehicle I own qualifies as a UTV or not?

Check the legal UTV specifications and see if it meets every single specification with all original equipment manufacturer (OEM) parts. If your vehicle does meet every specification, then it must be registered as a UTV. If you are unsure, call the DNR Call Center at 1-888-936-7463.

My machine meets all the UTV specifications, but it is made by a Golf Cart company. Does that mean it's a "golf cart" and can't be used according to the law?

Many golf cart companies make machines that aren't designed to be used on a golf course. These machines often have larger tires, better suspension and more power. They do not meet the definition of "golf cart" as listed and may meet the legal UTV specifications.

My UTV has a roll cage and seat belts. Do my kids have to wear helmets?

Yes, operators of UTVs must follow the same helmet law as ATVs. The law requires all children under age 18 to wear a helmet.

I can't find a DOT certified helmet small enough for my child. The only helmet available is too heavy for my child's neck muscles to hold their head up. Can they just wear a bicycle helmet?

Bicycle helmets do not meet the legal helmet requirement for ATVs and UTVs and are illegal. If your child is that small, you must think about the possibility that they are too young to safely partake in this activity.

I want to take my 3 year old child on my UTV, is a car seat required? If they are in a car seat, do they have to wear a helmet and a seat belt?

UTVs are not licensed motor vehicles like cars and trucks, therefore car seats are not legally required. All children under the age of 18 must wear a legal motorcycle or ATV helmet and be properly seat belted in. A child wearing an approved helmet and who is seat belted into a child's car seat that is appropriately seat belted into the UTV, would be considered in compliance with the seat belt and helmet requirement.

Does the license plate have to be displayed on the bumper, like a car or can it be up on the cab of my UTV?

The license plate must be readily visible from the rear of the vehicle. There are no restrictions on where the plate is attached.

Does my license plate have to be illuminated at night?

No, there is no such legal requirement.

I have a disabled hunting permit. Can I use my UTV in the same way I use my ATV?

Yes, except that UTV operators must be at least age 16 while operating on roadways or on public lands.

This publication is available upon request in alternate formats for visually impaired persons. Please call 608-266-2142 to request an alternate format.

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