

Dept. of Transportation: Motorists and ATV/UTV riders urged to share the road safely

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New Wisconsin law allows local communities to authorize ATV/UTV use on local roads with posted speed limits of 35 mph or less

Motorists could be sharing the road more frequently in some areas with all-terrain and utility-terrain vehicles (ATV/UTV) under a change in state law granting local authority to allow use on roads within territorial boundaries.

The state Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources urge motorists and ATV/UTV operators to stay cautious and be aware of these changes in the law:

2017 Wisconsin Act 87 enacted November 30, 2017, allows a town, village, or city to authorize the operation of ATVs/UTVs on roads within their territorial boundaries that have posted speed limits of 35 mph or less regardless of which municipality has jurisdiction on that road.

2017 Wisconsin Act 193 enacted April 3, 2018, allows a town, village, city or county to place a sign on each road that crosses its boundary alerting motorists that all roads under the municipality's jurisdiction have been designated as ATV routes.

"As the weather warms up, we're asking everyone – drivers and riders alike – to eliminate distractions and stay safe," said WisDOT Secretary Dave Ross. "Also, be

mindful that motorists may see more ATVs on state and local roads than in the past, and fewer signs indicating ATV routes.”

WisDOT has published a website with resources for riders and for local officials who are interested in learning more about requirements to establish ATV routes within their jurisdiction. The website also contains a downloadable flier for anyone who'd like to encourage motorists and riders to share the road.

The DNR publishes additional resources to assist ATV and UTV riders with safety courses, vehicle registration and knowledge of the law.

“ATVs and UTVs are growing in popularity throughout Wisconsin and, in some areas, it can be a sure sign of spring and summer to have more four-wheelers out on roads and trails,” said DNR Off-Highway Vehicle Administrator Gary Eddy. “Keep safety in the forefront of your thinking – no matter what you drive.”

Safety tips for motorists:

When you approach ATV/UTVs on the road, slow down and be patient for a safe opportunity to pass. As ATV/UTVs are much wider than bicycles or motorcycles, motorists will need to ensure they can achieve a wide berth that many times can extend into an oncoming traffic lane.

Keep an eye out for ATV/UTV Route postings, and remember that the new law allows postings at territorial boundaries so motorists might not see additional signage along individual roads.

Watch for riders. Always eliminate distractions, be patient and stay focused.

Safety tips for ATV/UTV riders:

If riding on a road, stick to authorized areas. Most highways and roads statewide remain off limits. Check for posted signs or with local authorities to see if certain highways and roads are legally open.

Travel at an appropriate speed and stay aware of your surroundings.

Stay as visible as possible, as some drivers might not expect to be sharing the road with ATVs.

Riders are required to operate headlight(s) when on or around roadways.

Always remember the basics by wearing your helmet and protective gear. Most importantly, never consume alcohol or drugs before or during ATV operation.