



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION **Changes to Ontario's**

Off-Road Vehicles Legislation/Regulations

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Off-road vehicles (ORVs) now have more access to the shoulder and paved portions of some Ontario highways. **These new regulations, effective July 31, 2003, apply exclusively to one category of ORV.** This is defined as an off-road vehicle that:

- has four wheels, the tires of which are all in contact with the ground;
- has steering handlebars;
- has a seat that is designed to be straddled by the driver;
- is designed to carry a driver only and no passengers; and
- meets requirements of federal [Motor Vehicle Safety Act](#) (MVSA) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI standard).

New regulations do not apply to other types of off-road vehicles such as mini-bikes, dirt bikes and moto-cross bikes.

Municipal Authority Regarding Off-Road Vehicles

Municipalities have the authority to determine whether or not off-road vehicles (ORVs) should be allowed access to roads under their authority. Municipalities must put a by-law in place for ORVs to be allowed access to their roads. Municipalities can determine which roads, where on the road, time of day, and season that ORVs are allowed access. They can also set speed limits that are lower than those set out in the regulation. If a by-law does not exist, ORVs are not allowed access to that municipality's roads.

More information specific to municipal authority is available at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca, Statutes and Associated Regulations, [Highway Traffic Act](#), Section 191.8.

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Where Off-Road Vehicles Can/Cannot Travel

- Provincial regulations apply to provincial highways only
- Prohibited from 400 series highways, Queen Elizabeth Way and most sections of the Trans-Canada Highway.
- Generally, vehicles will be allowed access to highways 500 to 899, 7000 series highways and highways with low traffic volumes.
- Specific provincial highways where ORVs can/cannot travel are defined in the [schedules of Regulation 316/03](#) of the Highway Traffic Act.
- Provisions allowing ORVs on roads in far Northern Ontario also apply.
- ORVs can operate on shoulder; move to travelled portion of highway if shoulder is impassable/unsafe
- Speed limit lower than posted limits:
 - 20 km/h - highways where speed limit is 50 km/h or less;
 - 50 km/h - highways where speed limit is over 50 km/h.
- Not allowed on rights-of-way (e.g., medians) between opposing lanes of traffic.
- Cannot operate in a construction zone, on a closed highway, or within a provincial park unless allowed by the park.
- Municipalities may pass by-laws to decide if, where and when off-road vehicles can be used on local roads.

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Driver's Licence and Registration Requirements

- Riders must wear a motorcycle helmet, have either a valid G2/G driver's licence or an M2/M motorcycle licence, registration and insurance.
- ORVs must be registered and have a valid permit except in exempt areas (e.g., far Northern Ontario).
- Previous exemptions for farmers, trappers and public utility workers remain in place.
- More information is available in the [Driver's Handbook Online](#).

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Rules of the Road

- ORV operators must observe a speed limit lower than posted limits.
- Passengers are not allowed.
- May tow trailers.
- Driver's view in all directions must not be obstructed.
- It is against the law to drive an off-road vehicle when impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Riders must operate their ORV in the same direction as traffic on the road/highway.

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Vehicle Equipment Standards

- ORVs must have the specified equipment (e.g., head lights, tail lights, working brakes, reflectors, low-pressure bearing tires).
- Width and weight restrictions appropriate to type of vehicle.

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Measures for Environmental Protection

- No person shall operate an ORV in such a way as to disrupt or destroy the natural environment including fish habitats, property and flora or fauna.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Increasing Highway Access for Off-Road Vehicles

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What are off-road vehicles?

Off-road vehicles (ORVs) are any two or three-wheeled motorized vehicles as well as specific vehicles described by regulations, with four or more wheels, intended for recreational use.

The following type of off-road vehicle is allowed access to provincial roads: - an ORV that

- has four wheels, the tires of which are all in contact with the ground;
- has steering handlebars;
- has a seat that is designed to be straddled by the driver; and
- is designed to carry a driver only and no passengers.

Where are off-road vehicles allowed to travel?

Certain off-road vehicles are allowed to operate on the shoulder of the road and can move to the travelled portion of the highway if the shoulder is impassable/unsafe. Generally, these vehicles are allowed access to highways 500-899, 7000 series highways and highways with low traffic volume (Summer Average Daily Traffic less than 5000).

The specific sections of highways are defined in the regulation schedules. Please refer to www.e-laws.gov.on.ca for details.

Municipalities have the authority to pass by-laws to define if, where and when off-road vehicle use is appropriate on municipal roads.

Off-road vehicles are not allowed on rights-of-way (e.g., medians) between opposing lanes of traffic. They cannot operate in a construction zone on a closed highway or within a provincial park unless allowed by the park.

Why does the ministry allow highway access for off-road vehicles?

Stakeholders identified a need for increased access for recreational users of ORVs so that they could travel between trails and use their off-road vehicles to access locations where they can hunt and fish.

Ontario's rural economy and quality of life is enhanced by allowing off-road vehicles to have increased access to specific highways under safe circumstances.

What are the rules for highway access for off-road vehicles?

The [Off-Road Vehicles Act](#) (ORVA) and [Highway Traffic Act](#) (HTA) govern off-road vehicle users and detail registration, licensing, insurance, road access and safety requirements.

How are municipalities dealing with off-road vehicles on their roads?

Municipalities have the autonomy to decide if, where and when off-road vehicle use is appropriate on municipal roads.

They may pass a by-law to allow off-road vehicles access to their roads and to define the times/seasons for ORV operation, as well as a lower speed limit.

Can an ORV operator be charged for drinking and driving?

It is against the law to drive an off-road vehicle when impaired by alcohol or drugs.

If the ORV driver is impaired or has a blood alcohol concentration of more than 80 milligrams in 100 millilitres of blood (.08), or if the driver refuses to take a breathalyzer test, the police can lay a charge under the Criminal Code of Canada.

If convicted, the driver will have a criminal record and may be required to pay a fine.

If a driver is convicted for the first time, he/she will receive a one-year driver's licence suspension. If convicted a second time, his/her driver's licence will be suspended for three years. For a third conviction, the driver would get a lifetime suspension from driving with the possibility of reinstatement after 10 years. Those convicted a fourth time will be suspended from driving for life with no possibility of reinstatement.

The convicted driver must also complete a remedial measures program assessment, education/treatment and follow-up before he/she can get his/her driver's licence back. Suspended drivers must pay \$150 to have their licence reinstated; and will be subject to the Ignition Interlock Program.

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Complete information about these regulations can be found at: www.e-laws.gov.on.ca