

### Snowmobile Riding and Safety Mr. Editor:

A new dimension of the wonderful world of winter has been opened in our north country, with the advent of the increasingly popular motorized snow vehicle.

Many people who are fortunate enough to own one of these machines, find instead of vegetating in front of the dubiously beneficial TV sets, now attack Old Man Winter by entering his kingdom on their terms.

Dressed in our wonderfully modern, light weight arctic clothing and gliding over that white blanket of snow seems to gladden the hearts of young and old alike who previously could find little good to say about winter in Vermont.

With every bit of progress in our modern society there seems to be a necessary adjustment to make and some pitfalls to beware of. Snowmobile riding is no exception. There has been a deluge of accidents in the Newport area requiring professional attention, which could have been prevented in most instances by following some simple rules.

In our mechanized world we find ourselves spending more time than ever in the sitting position resulting in reduced muscle tone in the abdominal and back areas of the body. This is a form of abuse by lack of use. The muscular and ligamentous attachments to the spine are very important in maintaining stability and absorbing shocks. When these structures have lost their integrity the body is placed in a similar situation as an auto without shock absorbers.

By the very nature of the construction of most snow vehicles the riders are sitting with their legs flexed at their knees and feet nearly on the same plane as their buttox. This causes an increased curve of the lower spine — in the opposite direction from normal—resulting in compressing the discs and lowering their shock absorbing qualities. Needless to say when the machine is used to jump over snow drifts the additional shock of landing compounds the problem and could very well result in a compression fracture of one or more vertebra.

This writer finds that riding with one knee on the seat, not only reduces these dangers of serious injury, but enhances the balancing efficiency of the rider. Also, jumping over snow drifts should be reserved for the TV commercials.

Winter in Vermont can be enjoyed more fully by practicing these simple precautions, rather than being laid up with a very painful and sometimes permanent back injury.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard J. Von Nieda  
Newport, Vermont.  
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