



BC Snowmobile Federation (BCSF)  
Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail  
Signing and Placement in  
British Columbia

Published By

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## Purpose Of This Document

This document provides guidelines for signs on recreational snowmobile trails in British Columbia and is endorsed by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operation and Rural Development (MFLNRORD). It should be seen as a process to improve snowmobile trail development as opposed to a rigid policy statement or requirement. It is anticipated that as a result of ongoing development that these guidelines will continue to evolve through time and the latest version of this manual can be found at [www.bcsf.org/signs](http://www.bcsf.org/signs).

## Introduction

Snowmobiling in British Columbia is primarily an off-road activity occurring in a natural, non-engineered, wilderness environment. Trails are primarily developed, maintained and signed by volunteers as a courtesy to snowmobilers, utilizing finite resources. Snowmobile trails often overlie resource roads (Forest Service Roads, Road Permit Roads or non-status roads) and these roads are often groomed for snowmobile use in winter to provide access to larger riding areas. As snowmobile trails are not engineered motor vehicle highways, nor is it preferable that they be so, trail signage differs significantly from signs normally associated with motor vehicle roadways. As with any wilderness environment, there isn't any assurance or guarantee that signs will be there at any given time due to volunteer resources, wind, rain, storms, wildlife or vandalism.

Snowmobiling has inherent risks and unexpected potential hazards which cannot be addressed through trail signs. Snowmobile trail signage guidelines have been developed for the purpose of consistency across British Columbia but snowmobile trail signs do not supersede or replace the responsibility for every snowmobile operator to drive with due care and control appropriate for

the conditions. In BC it is often difficult to tell when you are on a maintained trail or just backcountry riding on crown land. Therefore, there can be no expectation by riders for hazards to be signed and everyone who enjoys our trails willingly assumes risks associated with snowmobile trail use and the activity in general.

While there are many good reasons why grooming or trail routing in a particular area is less than optimum every trail operator should make signing a priority. The trail administrator, land owner, rider, local club and organized snowmobiling in general all benefit from good basic signing practices.

The purposes of snowmobile trail signs are to:

1. Regulate the flow of traffic along the trails,
2. Inform riders of trail characteristics,
3. Identify known hazards where possible within given resources and volunteer group capacity, and
4. Provide information necessary to the enjoyment of the trail riding experience.

Uniform snowmobile trail signing will:

- Enhance the safety and security of persons, vehicles and property,
- Improve travel within and between club areas, and
- Professionalize and promote recreational snowmobiling.

## Sign Installation

### Sign Orientation

The most critical part of sign mounting is understanding how reflective signs work. One good analogy is to think of reflective signs as mirrors. To maximize the nighttime view of the sign it must be placed at eye level, perpendicular to the direction of travel of the trail. This orientation also ensures that the sign is visible over the longest possible period so that the rider has a chance to understand the message and to react accordingly.

Ideally, all signs should be oriented perpendicular to the trail about 3' from the edge of the groomed surface and be at least four feet up to the bottom of the sign.

### Mounting Considerations

The methods used to mount trail signs vary greatly depending on the intended permanence of the installation. The following points provide guidance in selecting an appropriate mounting method to suit your circumstance.

1. Mount on right hand side- Generally, signs should be placed to the right of the trail to conform with the riders familiarity with highway signs.
2. Clear sightline-The sightline from the driver to the sign must be clear for the entire distance through which the sign is intended to be viewed. This requires routine monitoring and sometimes clearing of snow from signs.
3. Do not use trees - Mounting signs on living trees is not recommended. If it is the only alternative, use aluminum smooth shank nails. Please, ensure that all nails are removed when the signs are removed.

4. Use bolts or screws - For attaching signs to posts use bolts or screws instead of nails to reduce vandalism and theft. A cordless drill with spare battery packs is an ideal tool to drive screws providing the sign holes are pre-drilled.
5. Use durable materials for permanent installations. Use steel or wooden posts and metal signs for the longest life.
6. Most Important Sign on top - If more than one sign is used at the same location, they should be placed vertically with the most important sign on top.
7. Use separate signs for different directions of travel - It must be remembered that the trail will be used in both directions. Separate and often different signing is required for each direction of travel.

Overuse of signs should be avoided. Signage posted by businesses should be discouraged and carefully controlled by the trail operator. Extra regulatory and caution signs should be carried on grooming equipment to replace those which may have been vandalized or lost.

Maintaining visibility of signs in areas of heavy snowfall accumulations poses additional challenges in terms of sign mounting techniques and materials. These signing situations will require periodic inspections, clearing and adjustment of sign poles or stakes throughout the winter to keep signs from being obliterated by snowfall.

## Posting Distances

One of the most frequently asked questions in posting signs is how far in advance of the trail condition should the sign be placed. The table below offers some guidance on what appropriate sign posting distances should be for caution signs.

Suggested Minimum Posting Distances for Snowmobile Signs					
Judged Speed (kph)	Distance required to Stop	Deceleration Distance required to reach Desired Speed (kph)			
		15 kph	30 kph	50 kph	70 kph
30 kph	*	Slow Sign			
40 kph	*	100'	Slow Sign		
50 kph	175'	150'	100'		
60 kph	225'	200'	175'	Slow Sign	
70 kph	350'	350'	300'	250'	
80 kph	425'	400'	400'	325'	Slow Sign
90 kph	500'	475'	475'	400'	300'
<b>kph</b>	kilometres per hour				
*	no suggested minimum distance recommended. At these speeds, sign location depends on the physical conditions of the site				

A key factor in using this table is the judgement of the signing crew on what the speed of the majority of snowmobilers in that situation would be and what reduction in speed, if any, would be necessary for the snowmobiler to comfortably and safely negotiate the trail condition.







The first is a situation where a caution sign is posted so that a snowmobile can come to a complete stop before the trail condition. The most common examples of this situation would be a “Stop Ahead”, “Bridge Ahead” and “Intersection Ahead”.






The second signing situation is one where a caution sign is posted so that a snowmobiler might have to reduce speed, but not necessarily come to a complete stop. Examples of this situation might be “Logging Ahead”, “Steep Hill”, or “Dip”.



## Appendix 1 - Regulatory Signs






[All Regulatory Sign Files](#)

Sign	Name	Use	Download
	STOP	Instruct riders to bring their snowmobile to a complete stop before proceeding with caution.	<a href="#">File</a>
	YIELD	Instructs riders to yield the right of way to vehicles traveling on the other trail.	<a href="#">File</a>
	SNOWMOBILE ALLOWED	Identifies areas where snowmobiling is allowed.	<a href="#">File</a>
	SNOWMOBILE NOT ALLOWED	Identifies areas where snowmobiling is not allowed.	<a href="#">File</a>
	STAY ON TRAIL	Reminds riders of the importance of staying on the designated trail.	<a href="#">File</a>
	SPEED LIMIT	Reminds riders not to exceed the speed limit indicated.	<a href="#">File</a>








	ONE WAY	Identifies sections on the trail where snowmobiles may travel in one direction only.	<a href="#">File</a>
	DO NOT ENTER	Instructs riders not to enter a particular road or trail. Typically used in conjunction with one way trails.	<a href="#">File</a>
	NO WHEELED VEHICLES	Informs drivers of wheeled vehicles that they are not permitted on this trail.	<a href="#">File</a>
	KEEP RIGHT	Informs riders to stay to the right on the trail	<a href="#">File</a>
	TRAIL FEES IN EFFECT	Informs Riders that they are required by law to pay trail fees.	<a href="#">File</a>

## Appendix 2 - Caution Signs

[All Caution Sign Files](#)

Sign	Name	Use	Download
	STOP AHEAD	Informs riders that they are approaching a stop sign.	<a href="#">File</a>
	CAUTION	Use this sign to warn of a hazard when no specific sign is available for that hazard. The specific hazard should be printed on the space provided on the sign.	<a href="#">File</a>
	SLOW	Instructs riders to temporarily slow their vehicle.	<a href="#">File</a>
	HAZARD MARKER	Identifies a fixed object at the side of the trail. Used any time the fixed object narrows the normal width of the trail such as bridge railings. The stripes slope down towards the trail.	<a href="#">File</a>
	LEFT TURN	Informs the rider that the trail ahead makes a left turn.	<a href="#">File</a>








	RIGHT TURN	Informs the rider that the trail ahead makes a right turn.	<a href="#">File</a>
	GATE AHEAD	Informs riders that they are approaching a gate across the trail.	<a href="#">File</a>
	JUNCTION AHEAD	Informs riders that they are approaching a trail intersection.	<a href="#">File</a>
	BRIDGE AHEAD	Informs riders that they are approaching a bridge which is narrower than the trail.	<a href="#">File</a>
	WINDING TRAIL	Informs riders that they are approaching a series of curves.	<a href="#">File</a>
	BUMP	Informs riders that they are approaching a spot that is abruptly higher or lower than the trail on both sides.	<a href="#">File</a>
	CHEVRON	Provides additional guidance to the rider in a sharp turn.	<a href="#">File</a>



	<p>STEEP HILL</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are approaching a section of trail with an exceptionally steep grade.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>ICE</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are approaching a section of trail that may be ice covered and slippery. Proceed with caution.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>ICE CROSSING</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are approaching a section of trail which crosses a frozen body of water.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>CAUTION GROOMING AT ANY HOUR</p>	<p>Informs the rider that trail grooming may be done at any hour of the day.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>CAUTION LOGGING OPERATIONS</p>	<p>Informs the rider that logging operations are taking place in the area and trucks may be on or crossing the trail.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>SKIERS ON TRAIL</p>	<p>Informs the rider that other recreationists are frequently encountered on this section of trail.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>RIGHT HAIRPIN CURVE</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are approaching a sharp right turn of or close to 180 degrees.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>

	LEFT HAIRPIN CURVE	Informs the rider that they are approaching a sharp left turn of or close to 180 degrees.	<a href="#">File</a>
	TRAIL NARROWS	Informs the rider that they are entering an area where the trail gets significantly narrower	<a href="#">File</a>
	AVALANCHE AREA START	Informs the rider that they are entering a posted avalanche area	<a href="#">File</a>
	AVALANCHE AREA END	Informs the rider that they are entering a posted avalanche area	<a href="#">File</a>
	ORV CROSSING	Informs the rider that they are approaching an area in the trail where off road vehicles (ORV) frequently cross	<a href="#">File</a>
	SNOWMOBILE CROSSING	Informs the rider that they are approaching an area in the trail where snowmobiles frequently cross	<a href="#">File</a>

## Appendix 3 - Club Signs

[All Club Sign files](#)






	<p>REASSURANCE BLAZER</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are on a designated snowmobile trail. Colour may change in trail networks</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>TRAIL WAYPOINT SIGN</p>	<p>Provides information about the trail, directional information and reassurance blazer information. Reassurance Blazer Colour should match blazers used.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>TRAIL HEAD SIGN UNMANAGED</p>	<p>Information sign for the head of the trail that is <b>not</b> under Partnership Agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>TRAIL HEAD SIGN MANAGED</p>	<p>Information sign for the head of the trail that is under Partnership Agreement with Recreation Sites and Trails BC.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>STAGING AREA</p>	<p>Informs the rider where they can park or stage for the day.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>USE TRAIL AT YOUR RISK</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are riding on the trails at their own risk.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>PACK IT IN, PACK IT OUT</p>	<p>Instructs the rider to pack up and take home any garbage or cans.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>

	SHELTER	Informs the rider that there is a shelter in the indicated direction.	<a href="#">File</a>
	VOLUNTEERS	Informs the rider that they are riding trails that are maintained by volunteers	<a href="#">File</a>








## Appendix 4 - Safety Signs

[All Safety Sign Files](#)

Sign	Name	Use	Download
	ROOF AVALANCHE PERSON	Instructs the rider to stay clear of the area underneath the roof of the building	<a href="#">File</a>
	ROOF AVALANCHE PARKING	Instructs the rider not to park beneath the roofline of the building	<a href="#">File</a>
	CELL PHONE SERVICE	Informs the rider of an area where there is cell phone service	<a href="#">File</a>
	CALL 911	Informs the rider to call 911 and reminder that this service is free in Canada	<a href="#">File</a>
	ARE YOU PREPARED	Instructs the rider not to park beneath the roofline of the building	<a href="#">File</a>

## Appendix 5- Land Use Signs

### [All Land Use Sign Files](#)

	<p>WILDLIFE CLOSURE</p>	<p>Instructs snowmobile riders not to enter a particular area because of a wildlife closure.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>CARIBOU HABITAT</p>	<p>Instructs the rider not to ride into the caribou habitat area.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>CLOSED SNOWMOBILE AREA</p>	<p>Informs the rider that the area is closed and to observe and report any non-compliant riders</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>CARIBOU HABITAT STAY ON TRAIL</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are entering an area where closures are in effect and to stay on the trail.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>
	<p>SENSITIVE AREA</p>	<p>Informs the rider that they are approaching a sensitive area that is closed to all motorized vehicles.</p>	<p><a href="#">File</a></p>

## Appendix 6 - Corridor Setting with Poles

In forested areas, following the trail may be a fairly obvious and straightforward task. However, when trails cross fields, ridges, lakes, meadows or other cleared areas, trail routing may not be at all obvious. Relying on the groomed track for trail routing is not always possible since even a well-established trail can be quickly obscured by a heavy snowfall.

Both snowmobilers and groomer operators need continuous reference points to navigate the trail confidently. A simple method of identifying the trail corridor in open areas is to use poles that are mounted into the ground or snow adjacent to the trail.



In BC, where in most areas snow depths are 6' – 12'+ it is recommended that you use non-permanent plastic fence posts, PVC tubing or similar commercially manufactured synthetic products. This pole material should be from 6 to 12' depending on your area's usual snow load. The pole itself should be coloured or have a minimum of 12" at the top of the pole painted a color such as fluorescent orange which offers a high contrast to the background. It should also have a reflective strip or reassurance blazer 2 inches down from the top of the stake. There are many 3M reflective tapes that work perfectly for this and 4" orange or white seem to stand out the best. This will make the poles more visible in flat light or at night from both directions of travel.

These poles should be mounted in the snowpack adjacent to the trail when the trail is set at the beginning of the season and removed at the end of the

season. Periodically, throughout the season the poles should be pulled up to maintain a minimum of 4' visible above the snow.

The poles should be set in a single line to the left of the trail with periodic pairs of poles to create gates that reinforce which side of the pole line is intended for the flow of traffic. Each pole or pole pair must be easily visible from the last pole/pole pair. This spacing will vary on the nature of the terrain being marked.

If the corridor is more than one km long then a km marker should be fastened to the pole every km with the numbers increasing as you move away from the staging area or shelter.