

## Massachusetts Environmental Police Urge Safe Off-Highway Vehicle Use

BOSTON – Tuesday, April 23, 2013 – With the warmer weather approaching, the Massachusetts Environmental Police (MEP) are reminding off-highway vehicle (OHV) owners and operators to use safety and obey the law when riding all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes.

“Successful and safe ridership begins by being aware of the regulations and your responsibilities as a rider,” said MEP Director Colonel Aaron Gross. “Everyone should take a safety course and use what they’ve learned when they’re out on their vehicles.”

In 2012, there were 69 total recreation vehicle accidents resulting in five fatalities. In 2011, there were 76 recreation vehicle accidents and four fatalities, and in 2010, there were 62 accidents and six fatalities. Most fatal ATV accidents are caused by excessive speed or operator error.

**To legally operate an OHV in Massachusetts**, all persons under the age of 18 are required to take a two-part OHV Safety and Responsibility Course. The first part requires the operator to complete an online safety course through a state-approved provider. Upon successful completion of the online course, the operator must attend a two-hour classroom-based course, instructed by an Environmental Police Officer.

**If the operator is under the age of 16**, a parent or guardian is also required to attend. Once both requirements have been satisfied, the operator will receive a Massachusetts Off-Highway Vehicle Safety Certificate. This certificate must be on the operator at all times while operating an OHV.

### **Under Massachusetts law:**

- No person between 14 – 16 years of age shall operate an all-terrain vehicle or a recreation utility vehicle with an engine capacity greater than 90 cubic centimeters. When operating such vehicles 90 cubic centimeters or less, persons between 14 – 16 years of age must be directly supervised by an adult (18 years or older).
- No person between 10 – 14 years of age shall operate a recreation vehicle unless directly supervised by an adult while in preparation for, or while participating in, a sanctioned race, rally or organized event which has been approved by a municipal permitting authority. If operating an all-terrain vehicle or a recreation utility vehicle, engine capacity must be equal to or less than 90 cubic centimeters.
- Persons under 10 years of age may only operate an age/size appropriate dirt bike under direct adult supervision while in preparation for, or while participating in, a sanctioned event which has been approved by a municipal permitting authority. Preparation for such an event may only occur on private property.
- No person under the age of 16 shall operate a recreation vehicle across a public way unless directly supervised by an adult (18 years of age or older). The public way and the crossing must be marked and approved for recreation vehicle use.

**All OHVs** operated in the Commonwealth, on both public and private property, **are required to be registered**. Out-of-state registrations are not valid in Massachusetts.

### **MEP also wants to remind operators of these safety tips:**

- Never operate a recreation vehicle under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Doing so can result in fines, driver’s license restrictions, suspensions and vehicle impoundment.
- Operate at reasonable speeds.
- Wear a safety helmet.
- Operators are prohibited of operating within 150 feet of an occupied residence without permission of the owner.
- It is prohibited to operate a recreation vehicle on an ocean beach or sand dune in a manner to destroy, damage or break down the beach or dune.

- It is prohibited to operate in a manner to harass or chase wildlife or domestic animals.
- Report all off-highway vehicle accidents to the MEP at (800) 632-8075.

To find out more, or to begin the OHV Safety and Responsibility Course, visit the Massachusetts Environmental Police Boat and Recreation Vehicle Safety Bureau at <http://www.mass.gov/ole> or call (508) 564-4961.

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Office of Law Enforcement – known also as the Massachusetts Environmental Police – is the primary agency responsible for enforcing the Commonwealth's fish and game and boating and off-highway vehicle laws.

MEP officers are empowered to enforce all general laws, focus on laws and regulations related to the protection of natural resources and public parks and land; boat and recreation vehicle use; and hazardous waste disposal.

MEP officers serve as stewards of the state's natural resources, patrolling forests, parks, inland waterways and coastal waters throughout the Commonwealth.

**MEP will be increasing efforts over the next few months** to provide OHV safety classes, but also to follow up with increased patrols for illegal OHV operation.