

New York State Snowmobile Accident Report Summary for the 2009 – 2010 Season



**New York State Office of Parks, Recreation,
&
Historic Preservation
Snowmobile Unit**

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2009 – 2010 Snowmobile Accident Summary Report

Introduction

In New York State, the operator of any snowmobile involved in an accident resulting in injuries to or death of any person, or in which property damage in the estimated amount of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or more is sustained, is required to report such accident to an appropriate law enforcement agency. That law enforcement agency will in turn submit to New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) their original snowmobile accident report (OPS-208). These requirements allow OPRHP to compile the accident reports into this yearly statistical report. Each operator is also required to submit his or her own report to our office using the OPS-209 form. Copies of OPS-209 are available on our website.

This summary reports accident statistics for the 2009-2010 snowmobile season. The snowmobile season coincides with the State's Fiscal Year. Therefore, this report includes all accidents that occurred 4/1/2009 through 3/31/2010.

This snowmobile season encountered 294 reported accidents. These accidents involved 334 snowmobile operators, resulted in 237 injuries, and 14 fatalities.

Unsafe speed was listed as the primary cause of the majority of snowmobile accidents for the 2009-10 season. This is not necessarily speeding but operators who are riding too fast for the weather and/or trail conditions. Most accidents continue to be collisions with fixed objects, such as trees, after the operator lost control and left the trail right of way.

While we believe that most accidents are reported, it is likely that some go unreported.

The tables and graphs that follow provide detailed information on accidents involving snowmobiles. These are based on the tabulation of the data collected from the completed reports.

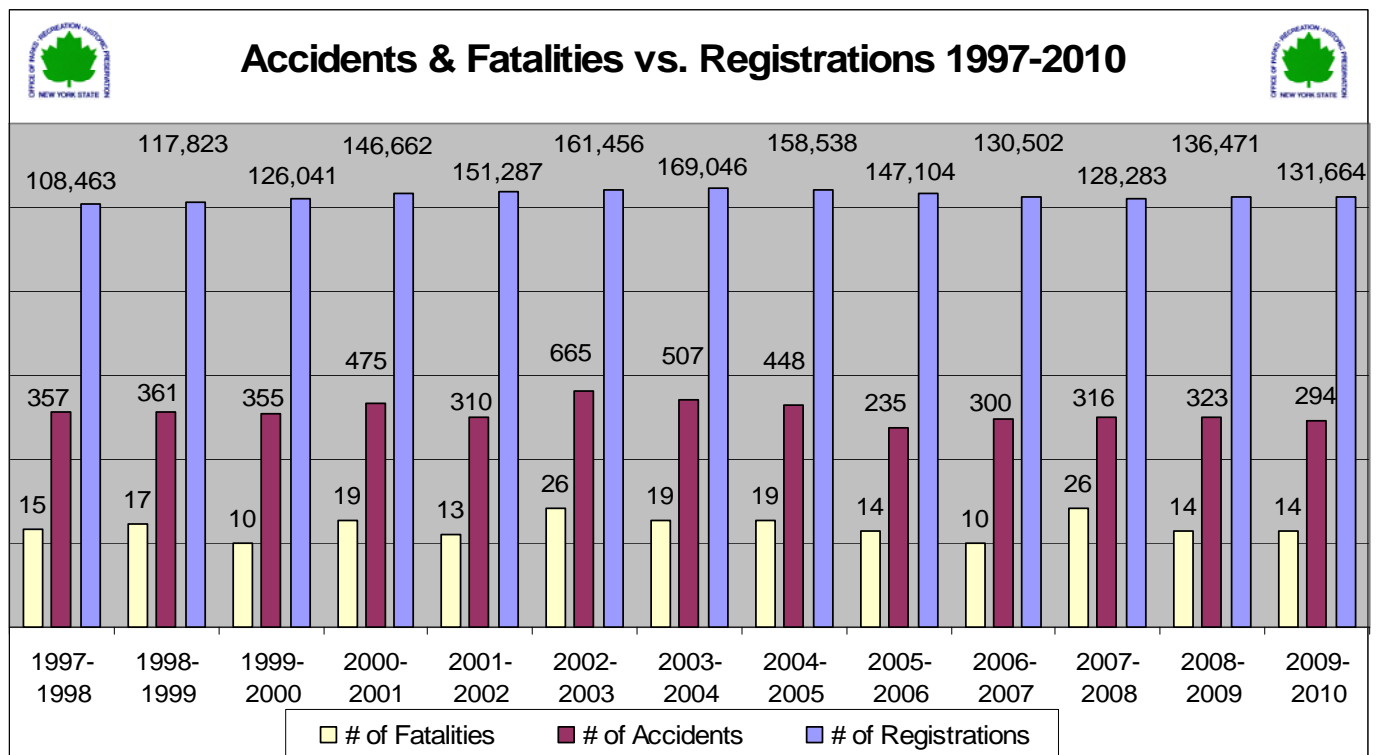
Safety Tips

The OPRHP Snowmobile Unit recommends the following tips to help ensure a safe, enjoyable and ethical snowmobile experience for everyone.

- Complete a NYS Snowmobile Safety Course. This course helps establish a safety mindset and provides basic knowledge in safe, legal and ethical operation. Visit www.nysparks.com to find a course near you.
- Use the highest degree of caution while traveling across frozen waterways. Check local ice conditions, carry or wear a floatation device, limit travel at night and if you DON'T KNOW, DON'T GO.
- Use the buddy system; never ride alone.
- Don't drink and ride. Alcohol affects a person's reaction time and judgment. Wait until you're done riding for the day before consuming any alcoholic beverages. If not for yourself, do it for your family and friends.

- Slow down. High speed operation leaves little room for mistakes and greatly increases stopping distances. Many snowmobile fatalities could have been prevented if the operators were only going slower.
- Nighttime speeds above 40 m.p.h. cause operators to override their headlamps. At this speed, operators have little chance of avoiding a hazard once it is illuminated by their headlamps.
- When riding in groups, always maintain a safe following distance of 2-3 seconds. Increase your following distance when travelling at night or when experiencing snow dust.
- Respect private property. The majority of the snowmobile trails in NY are on private property. Snowmobile clubs invest much time and effort to set up agreements with landowners each year. Riding outside the marked trails on private property is trespassing and has caused landowners to close their properties to trails, sometimes forever. Stay within the marked trails and don't cut corners.

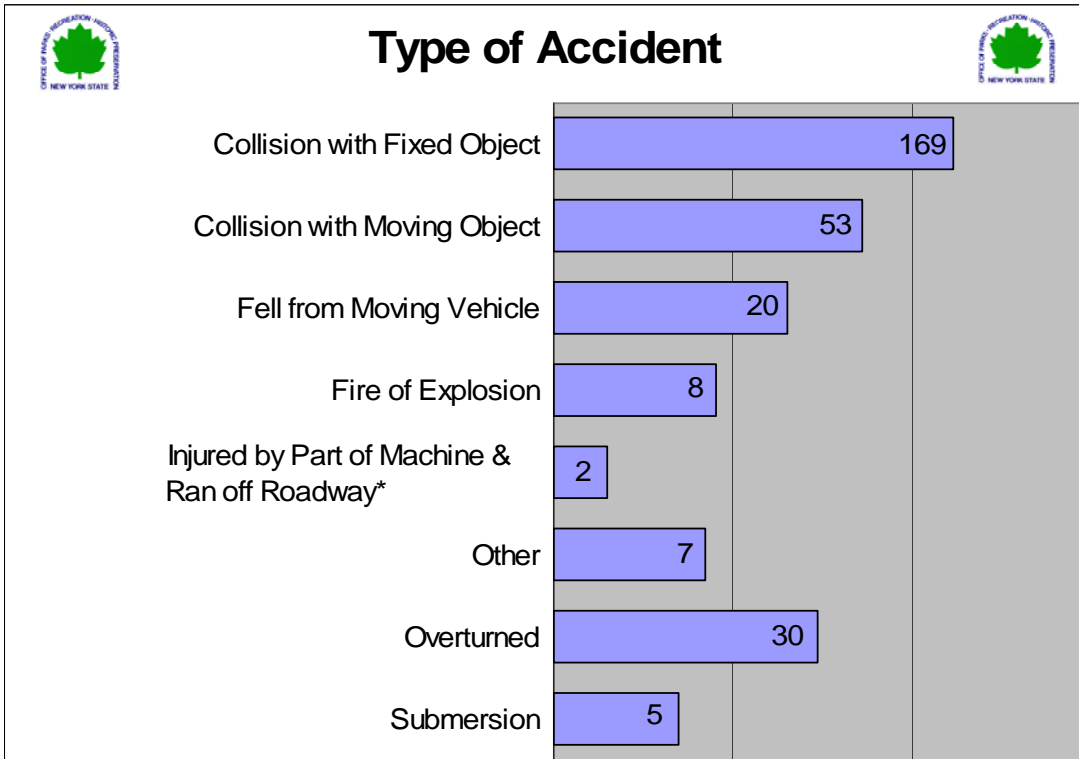
History of Accidents



Snowmobile registrations for the 2009-2010 season totaled 131,664. This is a decrease from the 2008-2009 season of 136,471 registrations.

Snowmobiles in NYS are required to be registered and insured annually if operated on lands other than those owned by the operator.

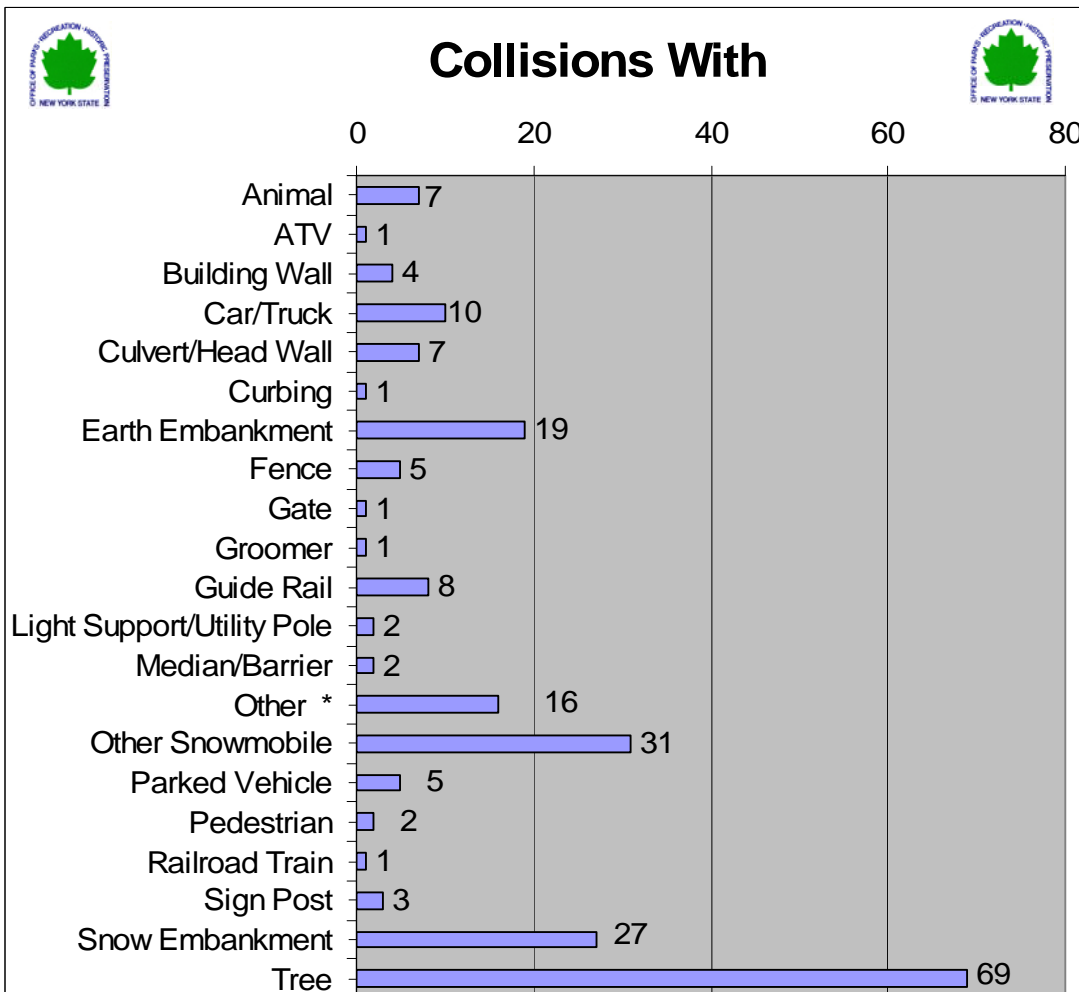
Accidents & Collisions



Type of Accident –
 This table shows the types of accidents that occurred in the 2009-10 season.

Collisions with fixed objects are the most common type of accident.

* Both “Injured by Part of Machine” & “Ran Off Roadway” were each listed once.



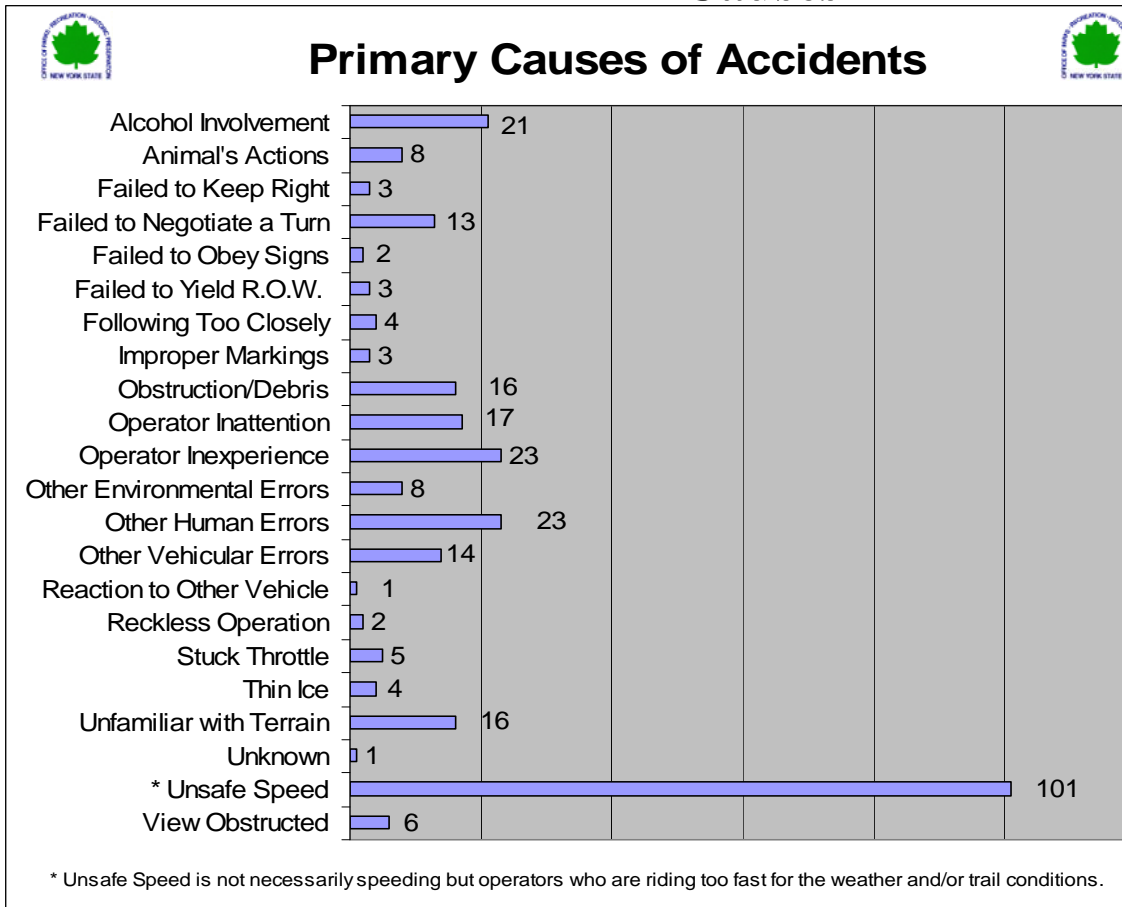
Collisions With –
 Collisions are the most common type of accident. This graph looks at what is being hit.

Trees were the objects most often struck. Other snowmobiles and snow embankments were close behind.

* Other includes rocks, rough ice/ice ridges, boat docks, etc.

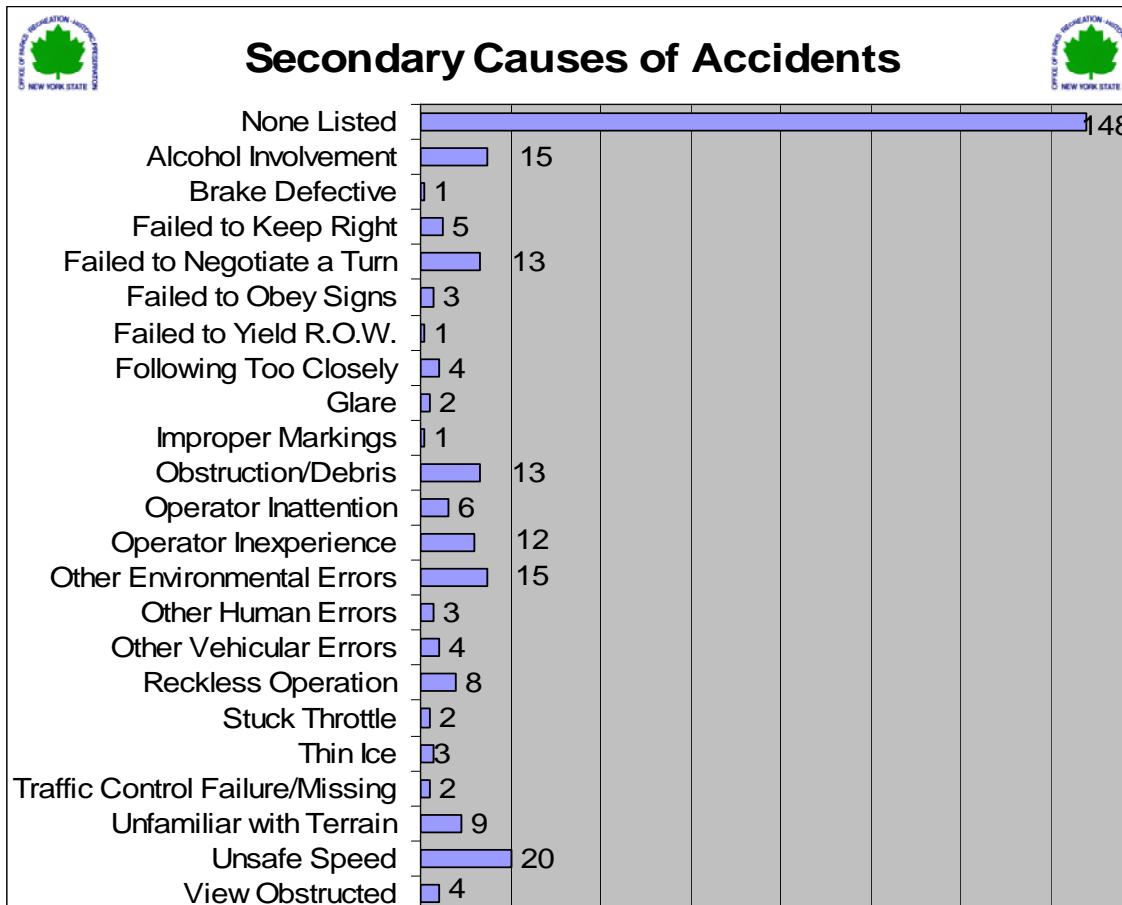
Out of the 294 total accidents, only 222 involved a collision with an object.

Causes



Primary Causes of Accidents –
 This table shows the primary causes of the accidents in the 2009-10 season.

Unsafe speed is by far the primary factor. This is not necessarily speeding but operators who are riding too fast for the weather and/or trail conditions.

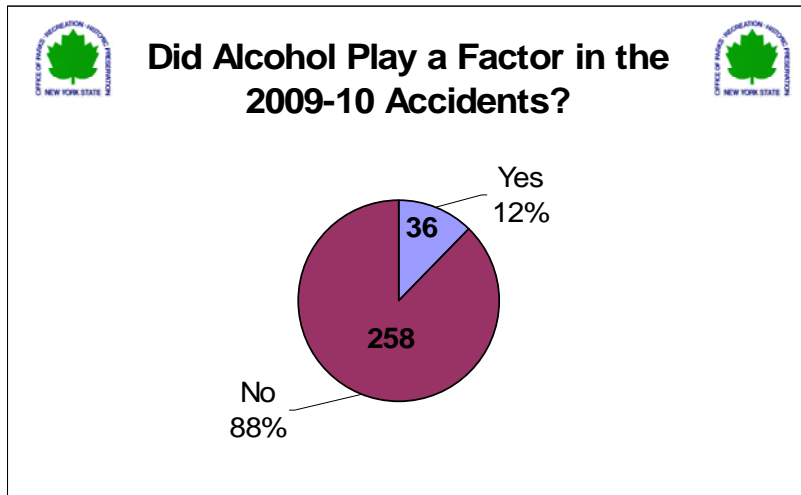


Secondary Causes –
 This table counts all instances in which a secondary cause was noted.

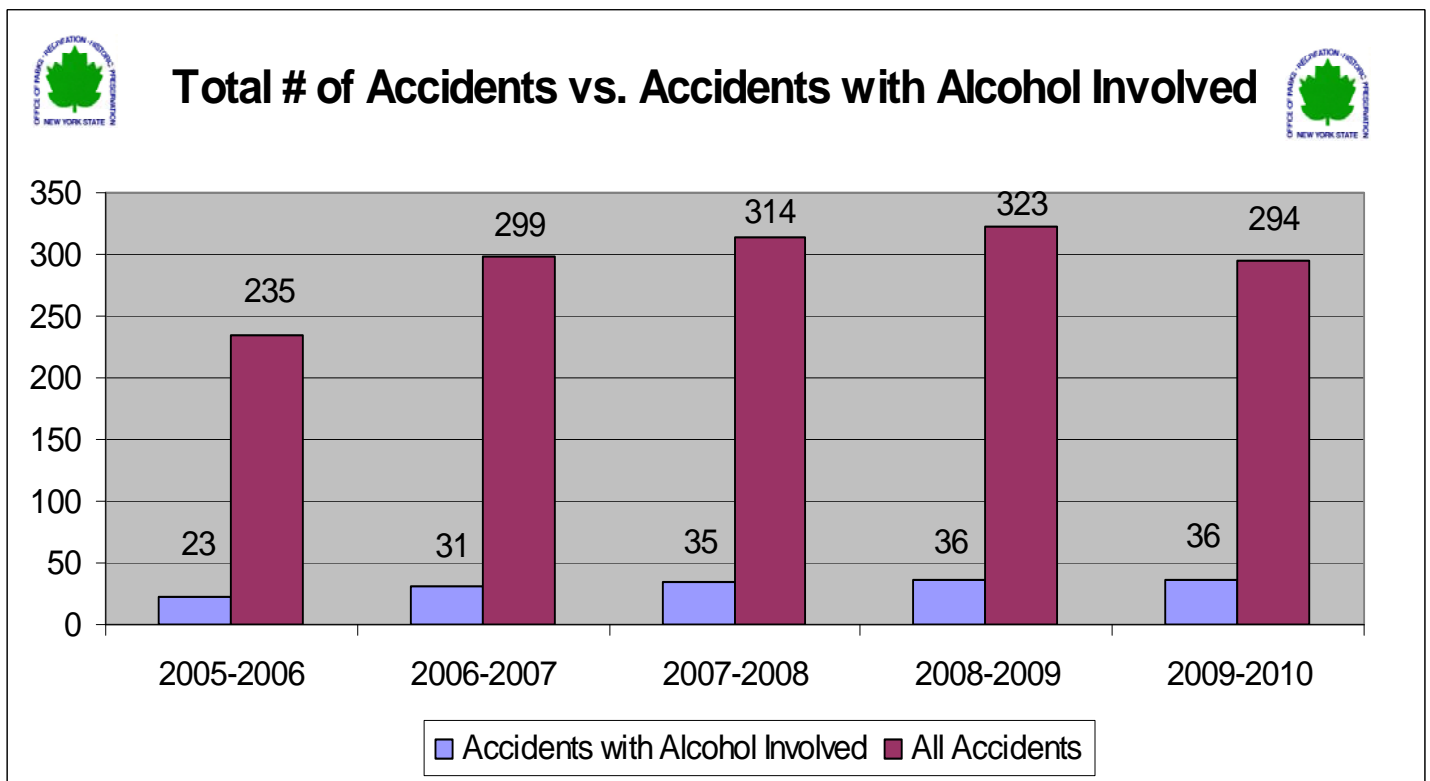
More than half of the 2009-2010 accident reports did not attribute a secondary cause. The remaining 49%, however, did identify one of the various factors listed.

Alcohol Involvement: Past & Present

2009-10 Season

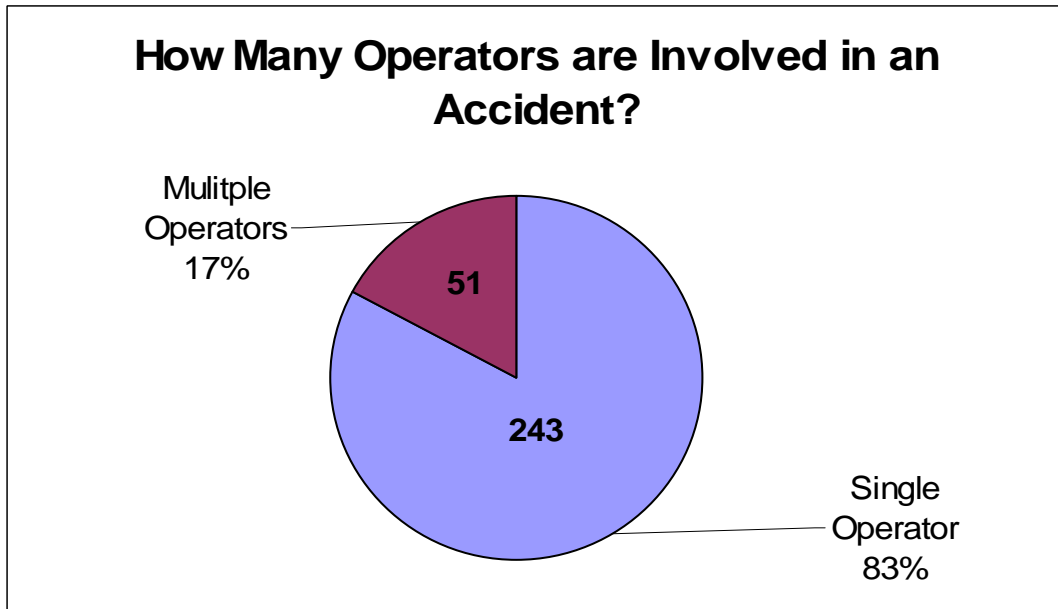
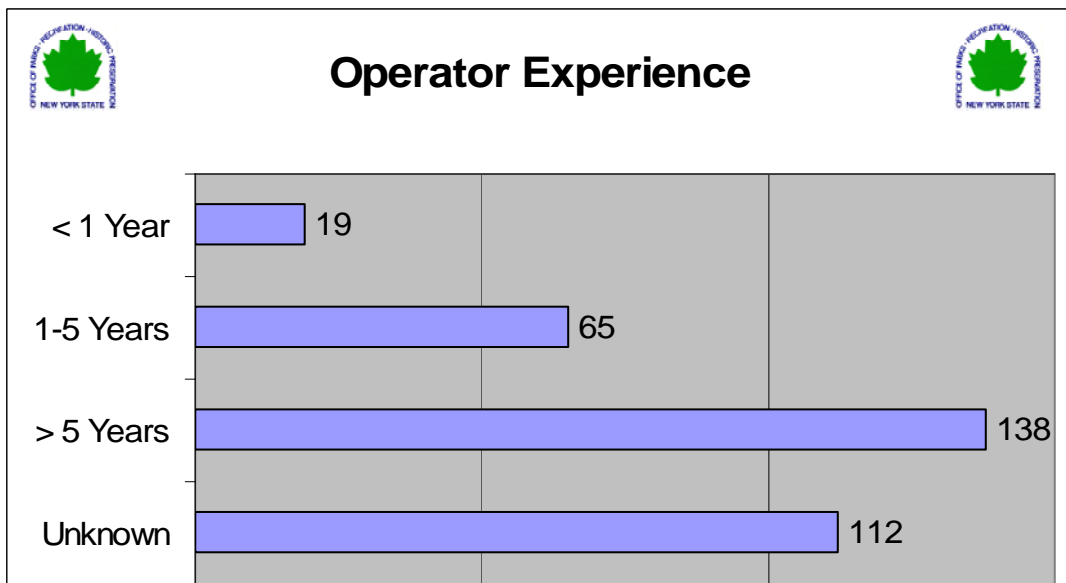
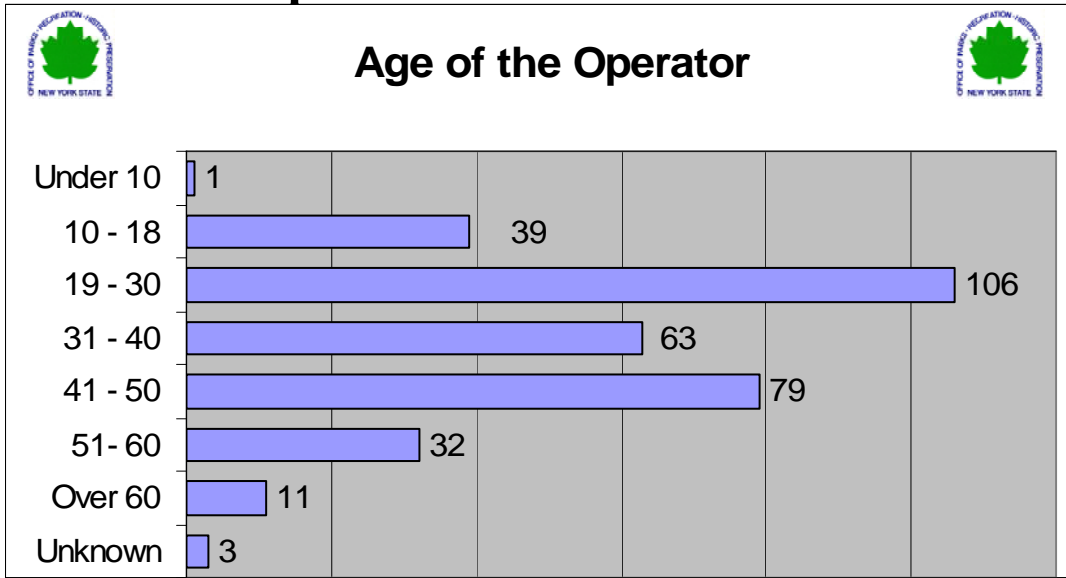


History 2004-2010

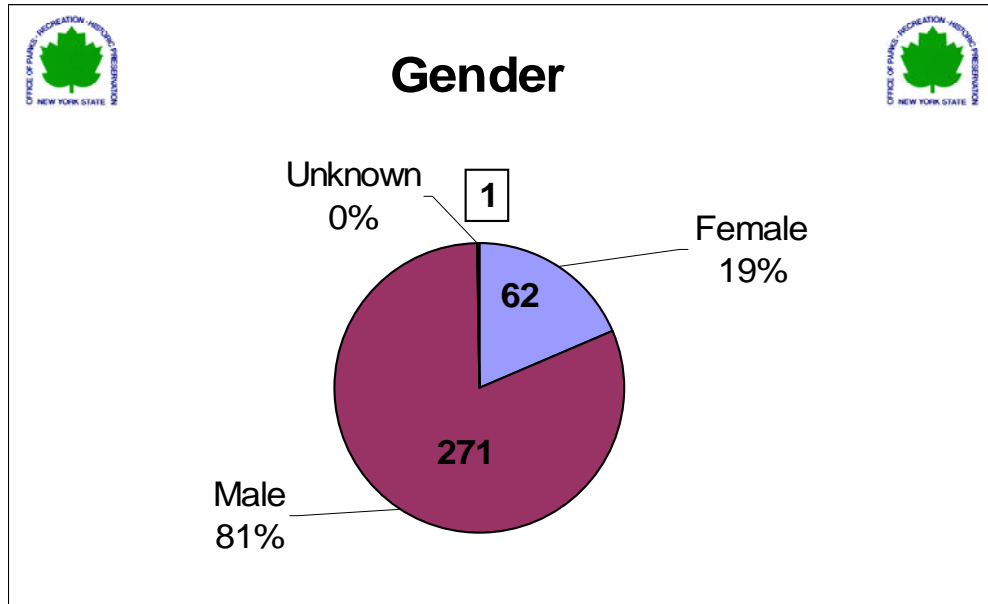


While there is a slight rise in the number of accidents and those involving alcohol since 2005, some of this can be explained by a sharp increase in the number of riding days. During the 2005-2006 season, the first major snowfall across the state was in mid-February.

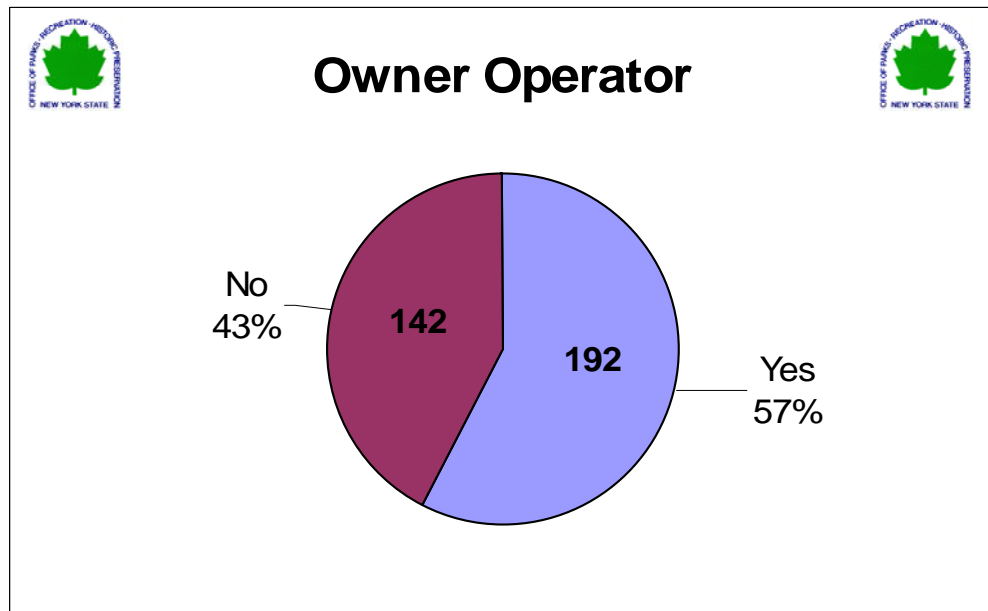
Operator Information



Operator Information (continued)



Gender – The gender of one operator remains unknown because he or she did not stop to provide information for the accident report.

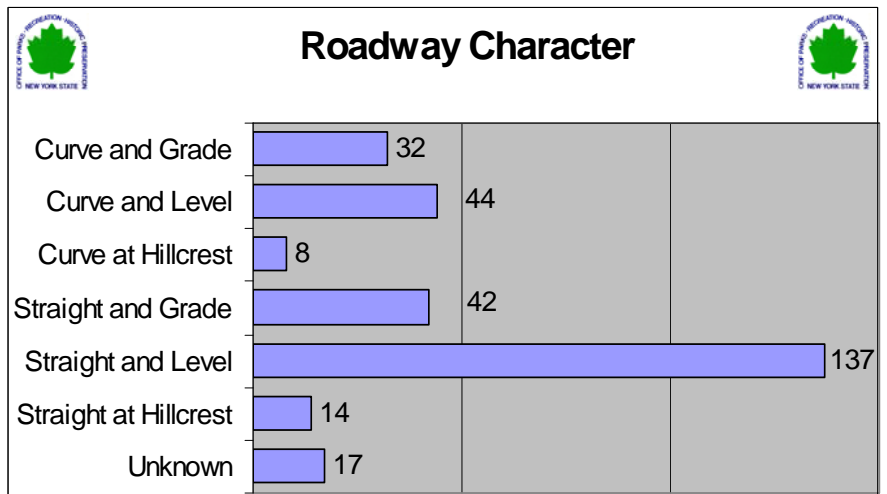
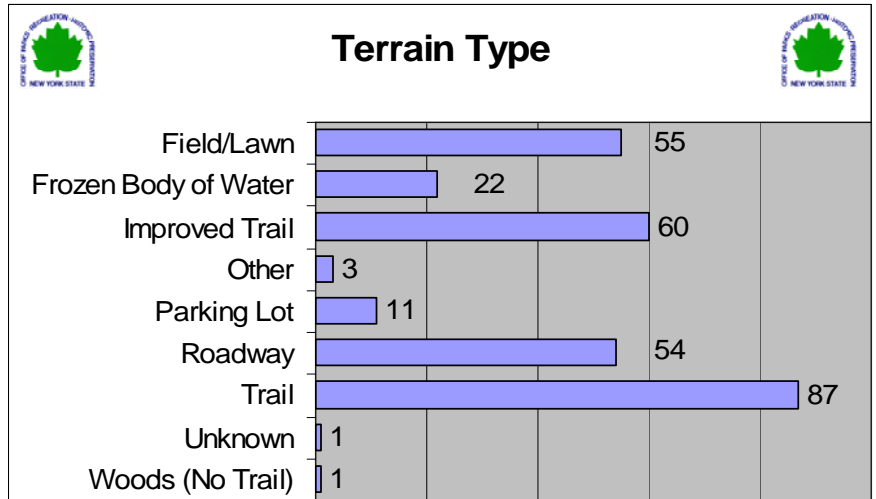


Owner Operator – This chart examines how many accidents occur by those who own and should be more familiar with the vehicle.

Accident Locations

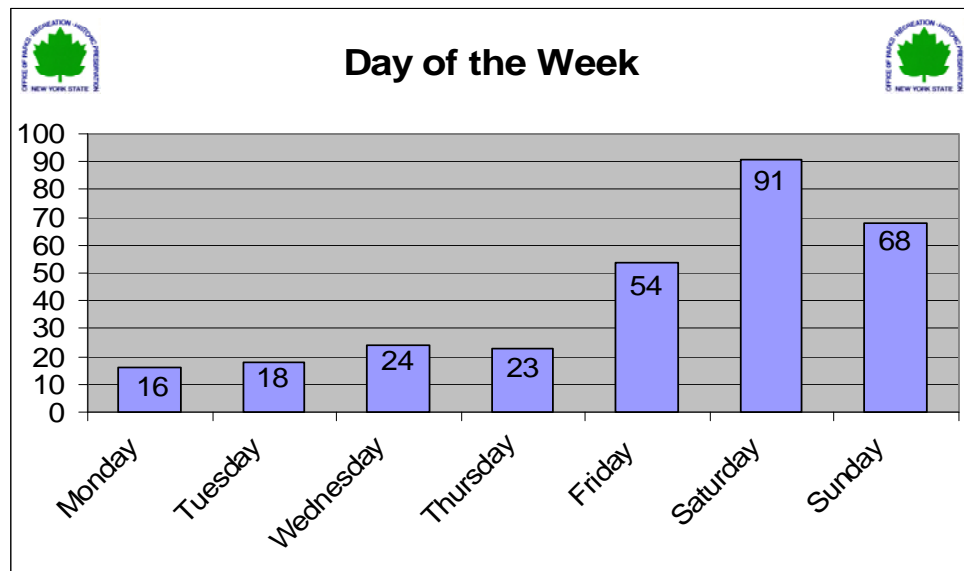
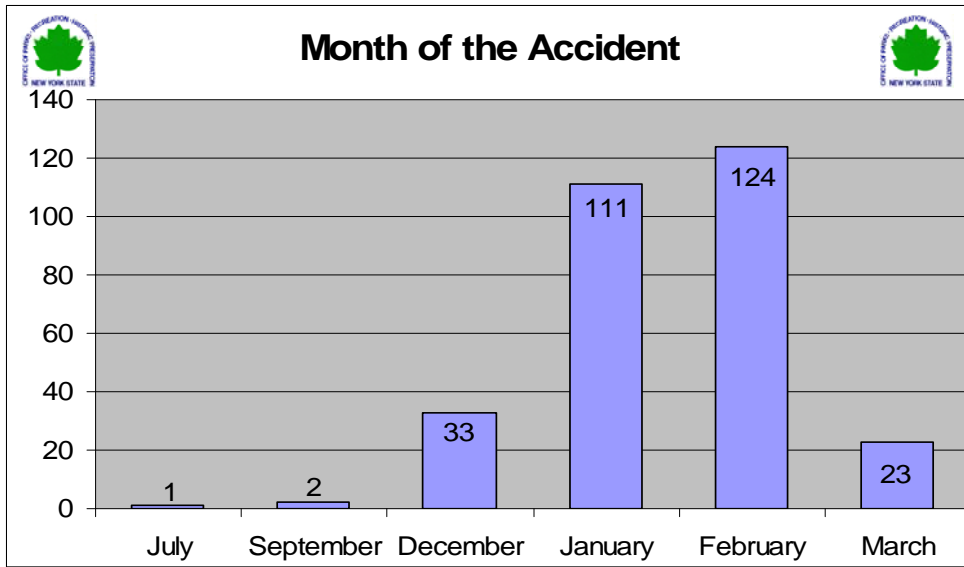
County

County of Incident	# of Accidents	# of Fatalities	# of Injured
Albany	3	0	3
Allegany	2	0	2
Cattaraugus	5	0	3
Cayuga	8	0	6
Chautauqua	24	1	23
Chenango	3	1	2
Clinton	3	1	2
Columbia	3	2	1
Cortland	2	0	2
Delaware	2	0	2
Erie	9	0	10
Essex	1	1	1
Franklin	12	1	8
Fulton	8	0	7
Genesee	2	0	2
Hamilton	13	0	13
Herkimer	31	3	25
Jefferson	6	0	3
Lewis	43	2	27
Livingston	1	0	1
Madison	9	0	6
Monroe	5	0	3
Montgomery	2	0	2
Niagara	4	0	3
Oneida	26	0	23
Onondaga	4	0	2
Ontario	2	0	2
Orange	1	1	0
Oswego	13	0	8
Otsego	4	0	4
St. Lawrence	12	1	10
Saratoga	3	0	4
Schenectady	1	0	1
Schuyler	2	0	3
Seneca	1	0	1
Tioga	2	0	2
Warren	3	0	4
Washington	3	0	2
Wayne	5	0	4
Wyoming	10	0	9
Yates	1	0	1
Total	294	14	237

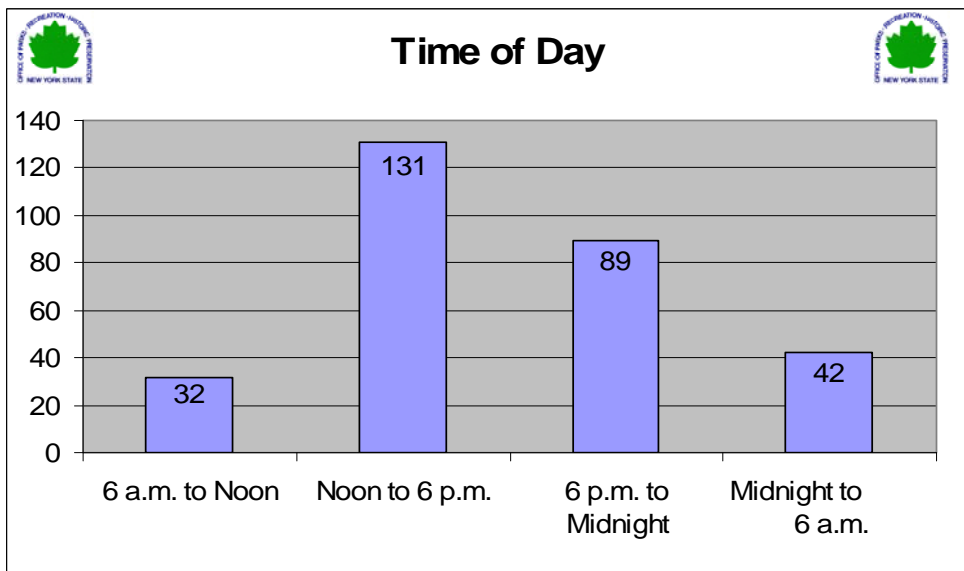


Roadway Character - The roadway character applies to any area at which an accident occurred, not only the roadway. It is designed to indicate the physical condition of the terrain at the accident scene.

When the Accidents Occurred



Day of the Week – Saturday remains the day in which the majority of accidents take place.



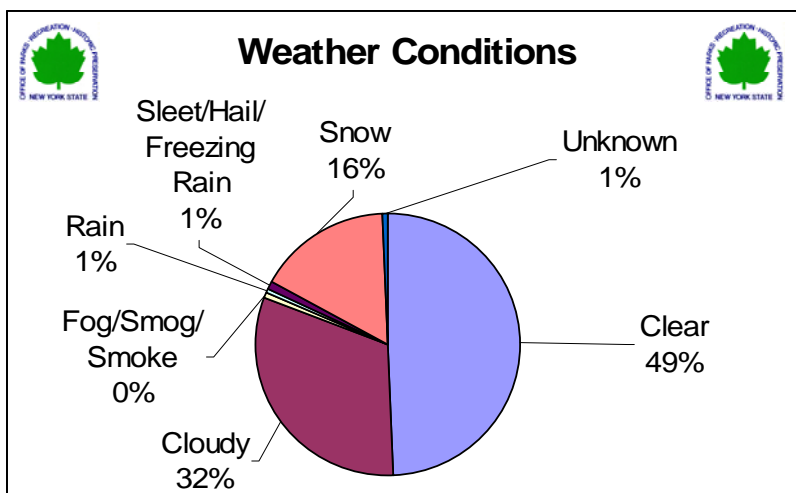
Time of Day – More accidents this season have taken place during daylight hours. This continues a trend in NY of more accidents occurring during daylight hours.

Other Possible Factors

Weather Conditions

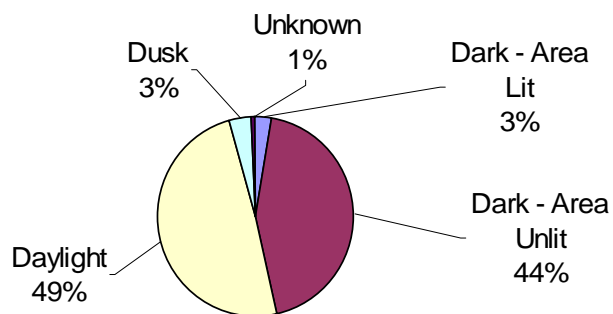
Weather	# of Accidents
Clear	145
Cloudy	93
Fog/Smog/Smoke	1
Rain	2
Sleet/Hail/Freezing Rain	3
Snow	48
Unknown	2
Total	294

Weather Conditions – The table and pie chart illustrate that over 80% of the accidents took place when the operator was experiencing clear or only cloudy conditions rather than snow, sleet/hail/freezing rain.



Light Conditions

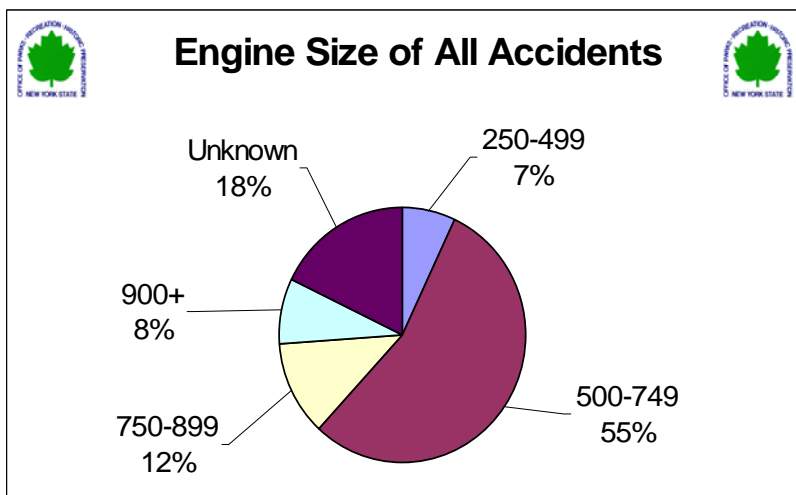
Light Conditions	# of Accidents
Dark - Area Lit	8
Dark - Area Unlit	128
Daylight	146
Dusk	10
Unknown	2
Total	294



Engine Size

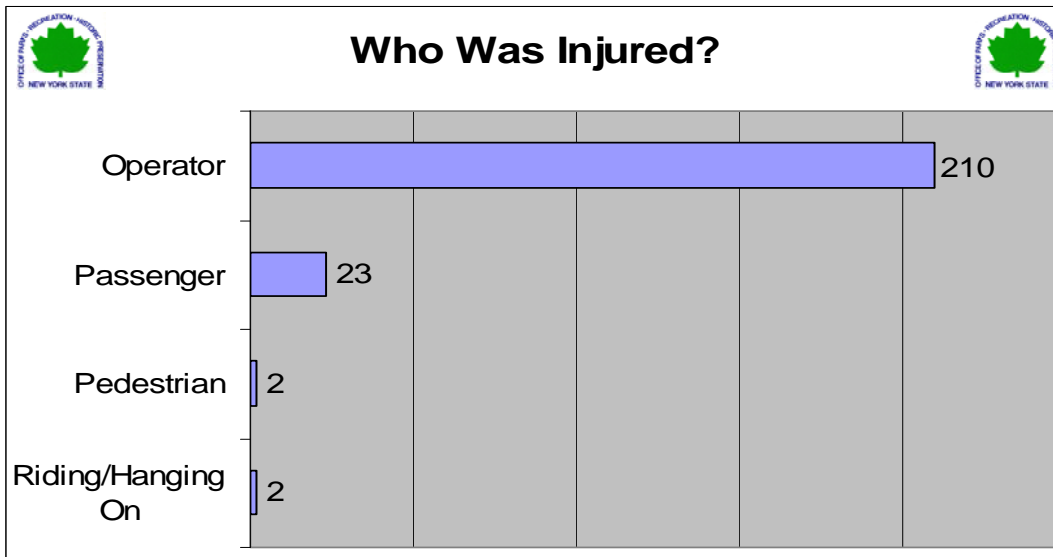
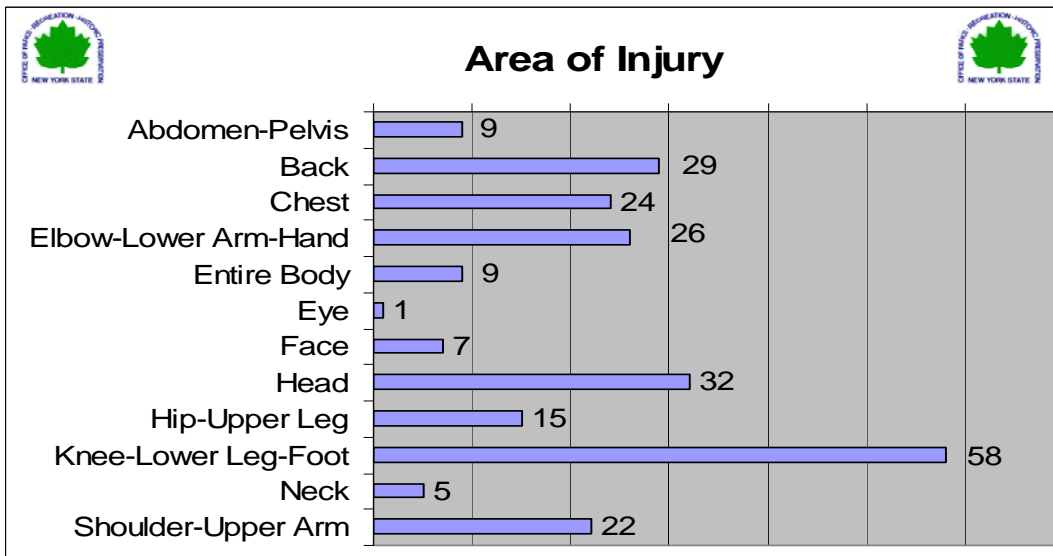
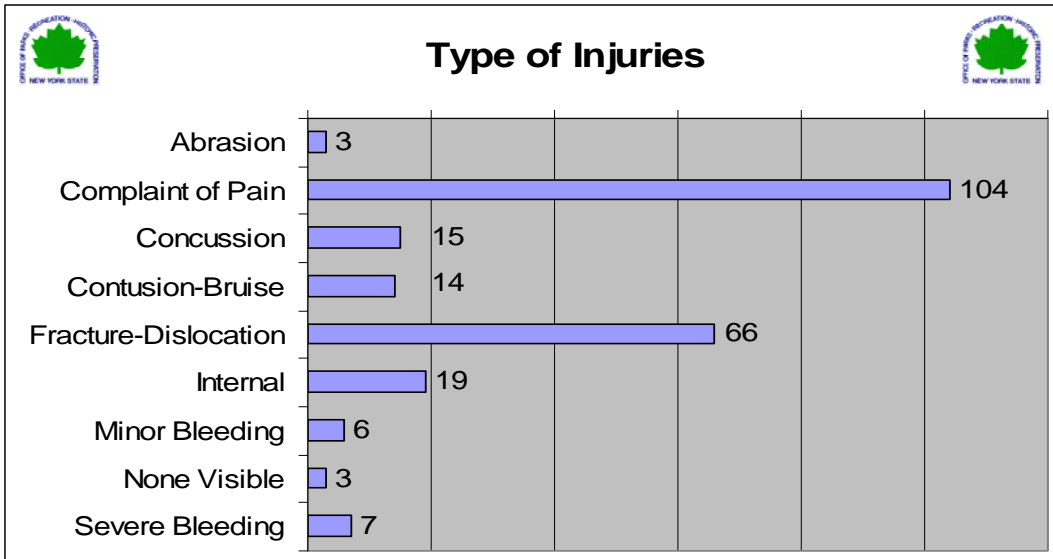
Engine Size	Occurrences
250-499	23
500-749	184
750-899	40
900+	28
Unknown	59
Total	334

Engine Size – The table and pie chart provide a breakdown of the engine size within the machines operated by all 334 operators that were involved in the 294 accidents this season.



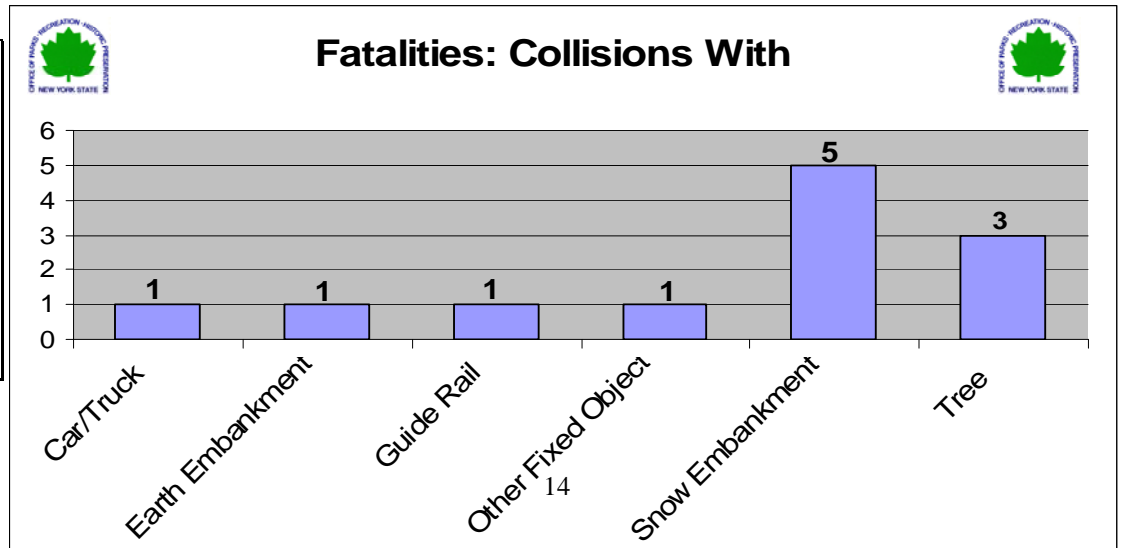
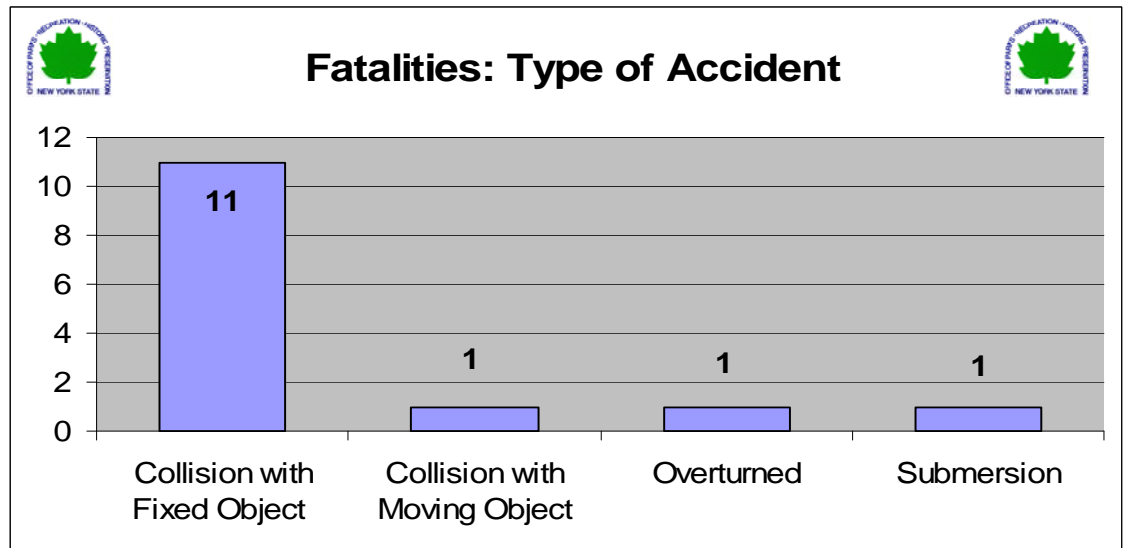
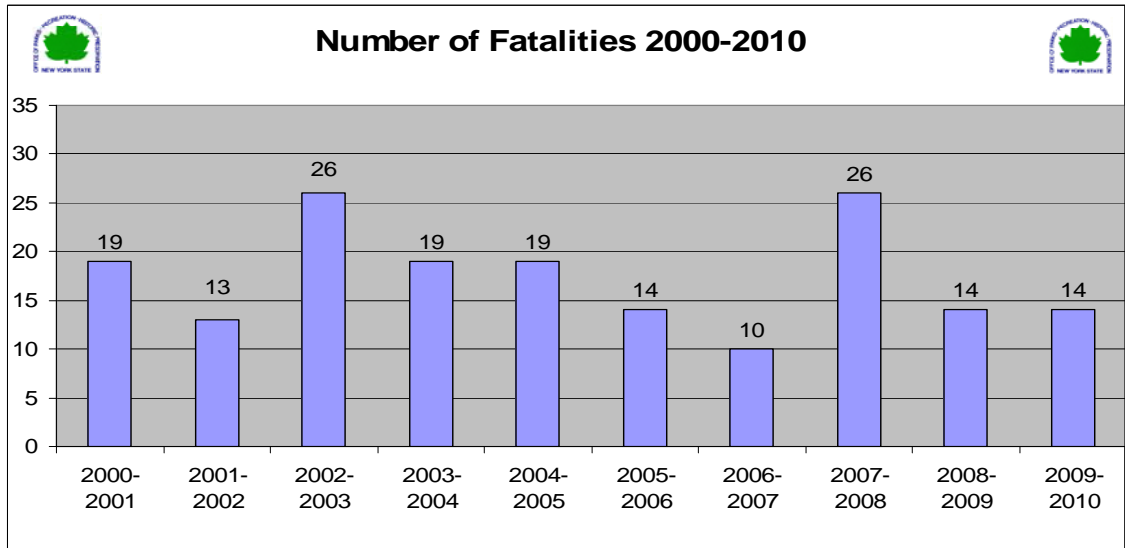
Injuries

The 294 accidents resulted in 237 injuries.



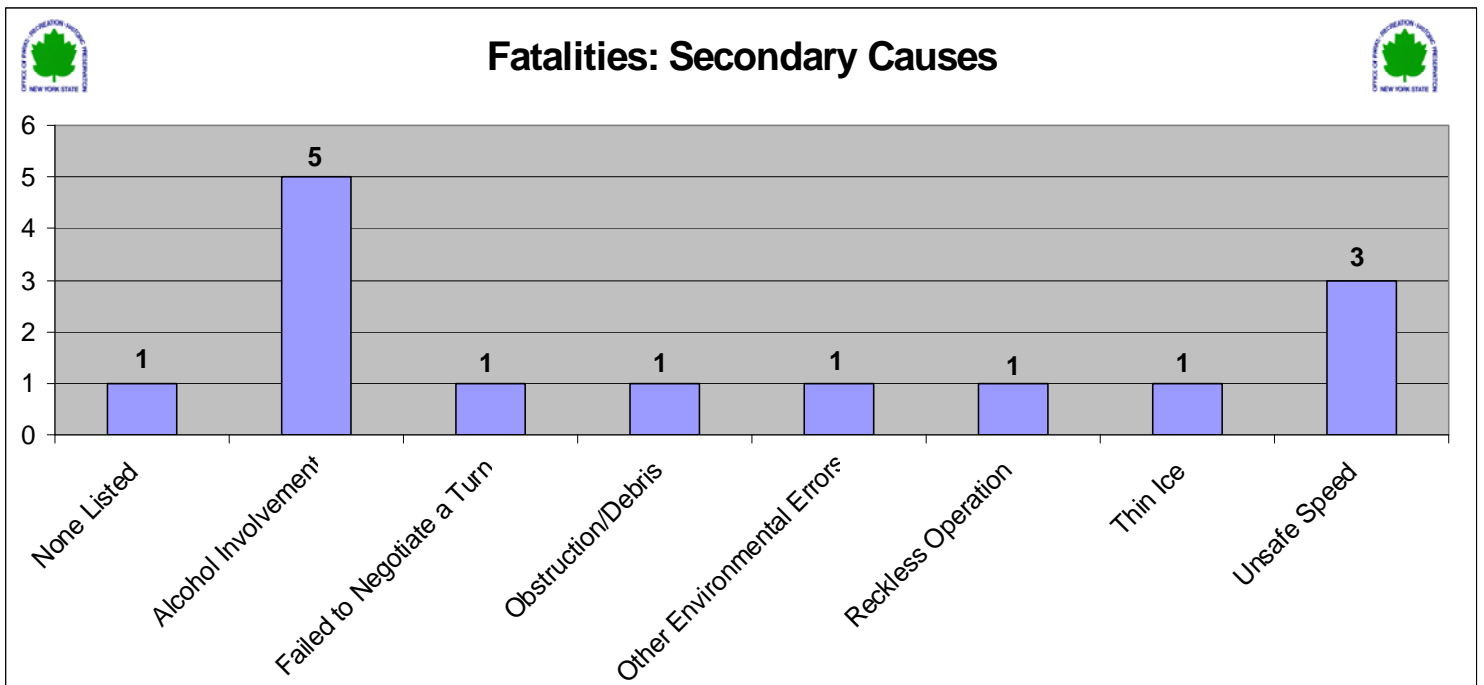
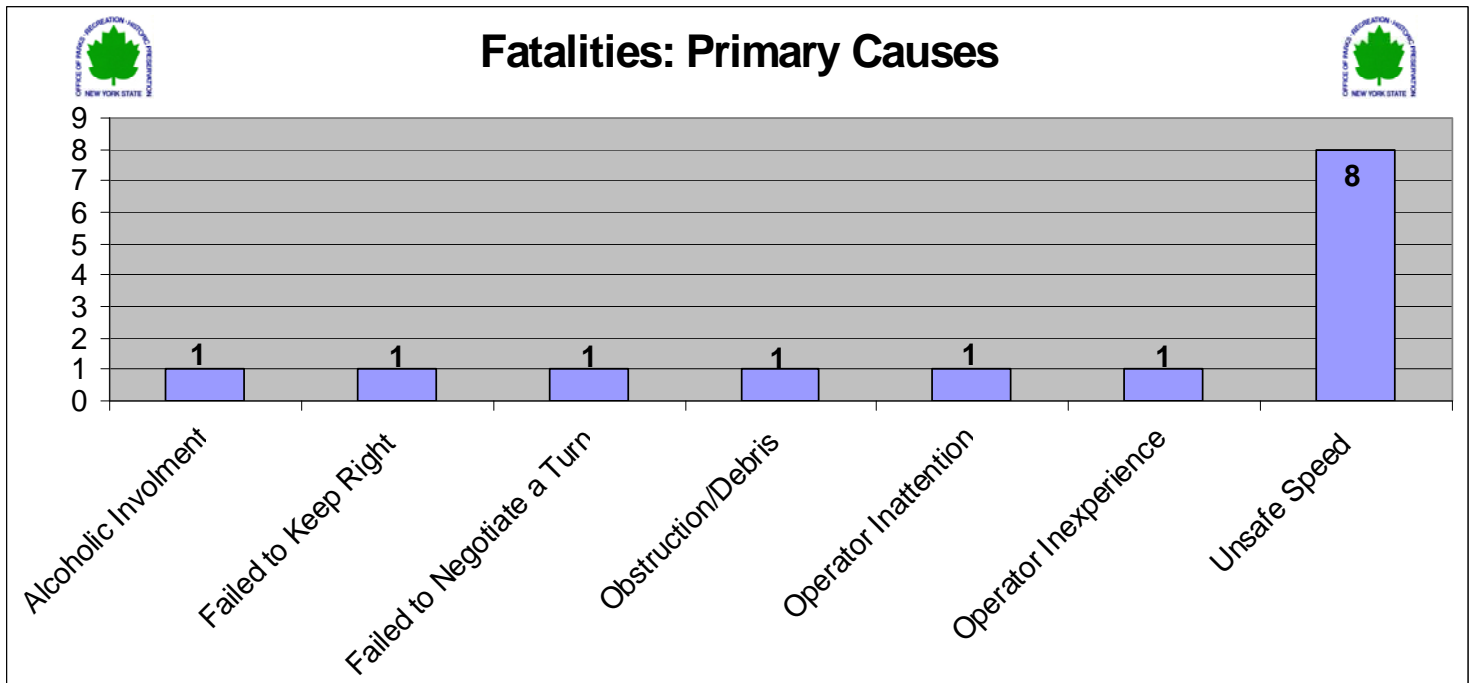
Fatalities

Of the 14 fatal accidents that occurred during the 2009-10 snowmobile season, unsafe speed was the primary cause of 57% of the accidents. Alcohol involvement was identified as a factor in 43% of this season's fatal accidents. Helmets were worn in all of this season's fatal accidents except two. All fatal victims were the operators of their own snowmobile.



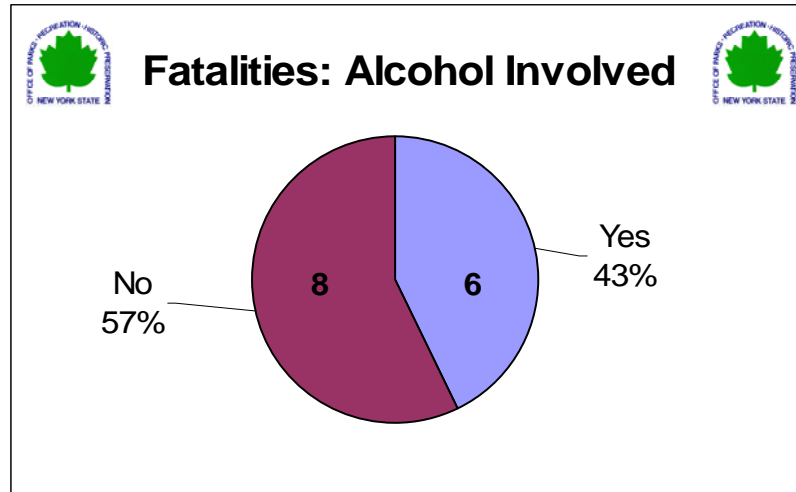
Fatalities Collision With- Out of the 14 fatalities, only 12 involved a collision with an object.

Cause of Fatalities

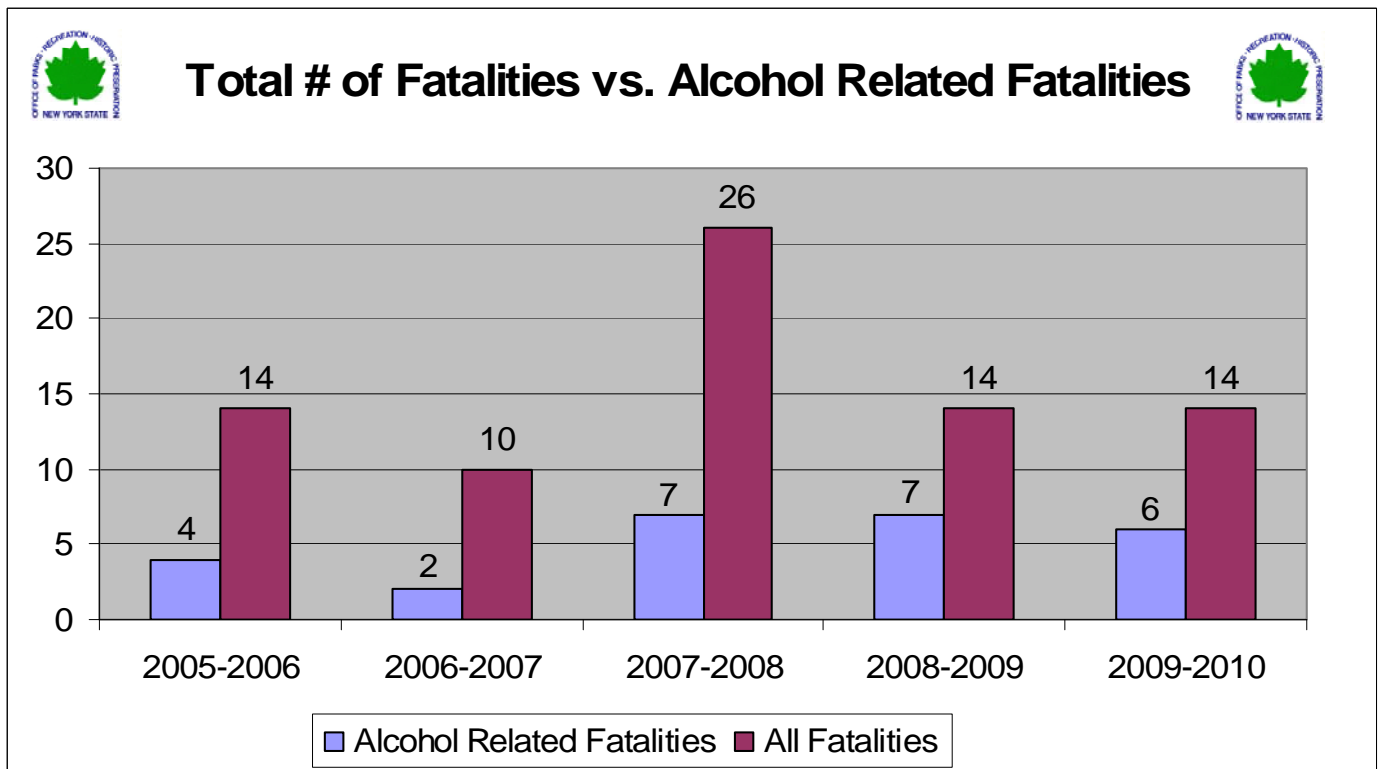


Fatalities & Alcohol

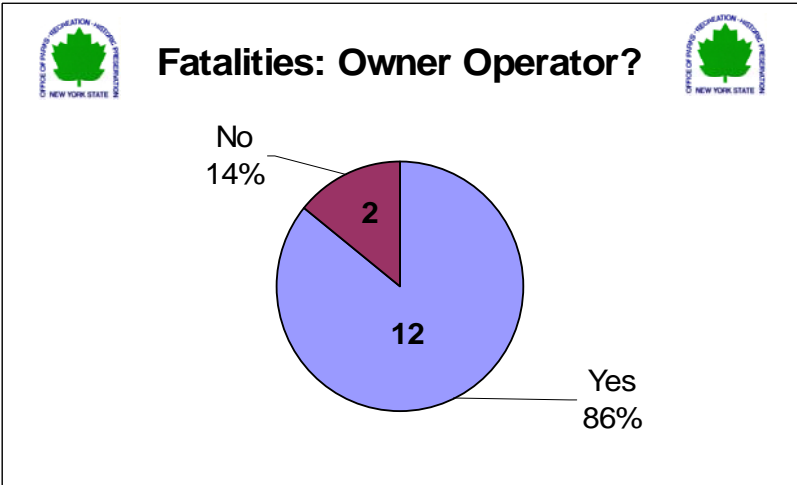
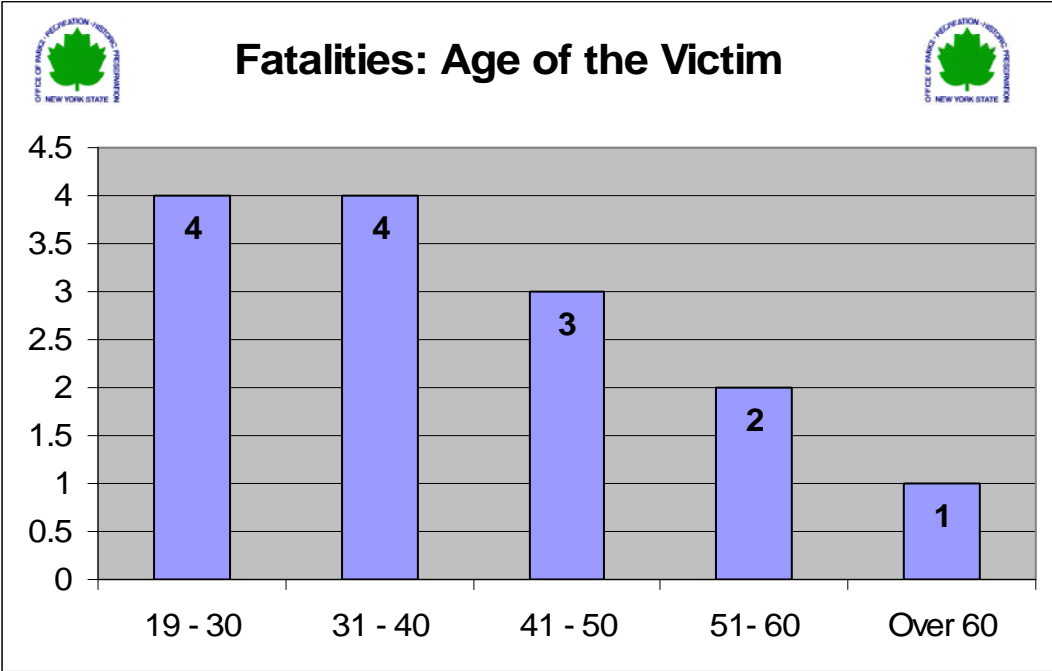
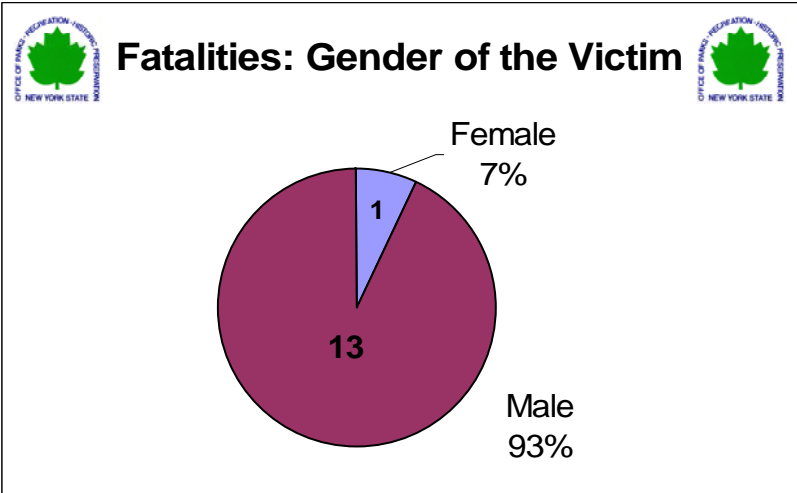
2009-2010 Season



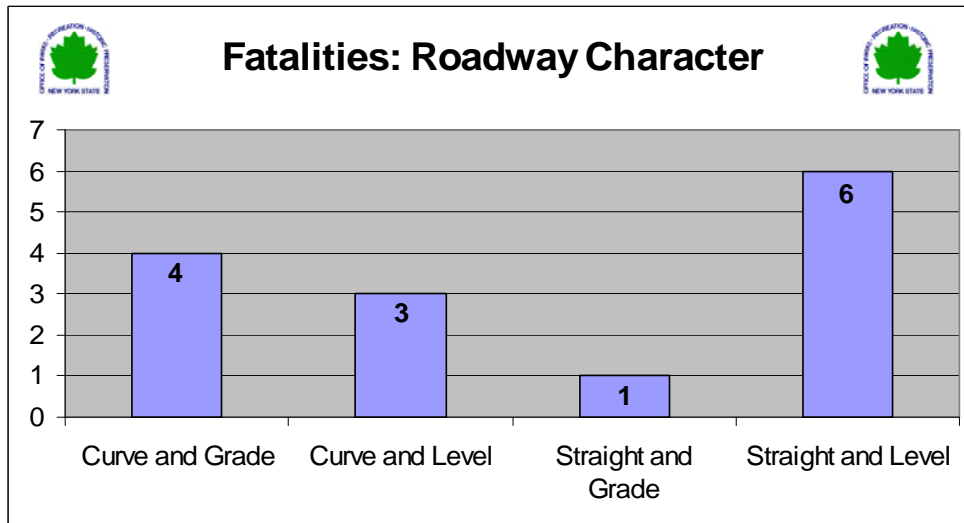
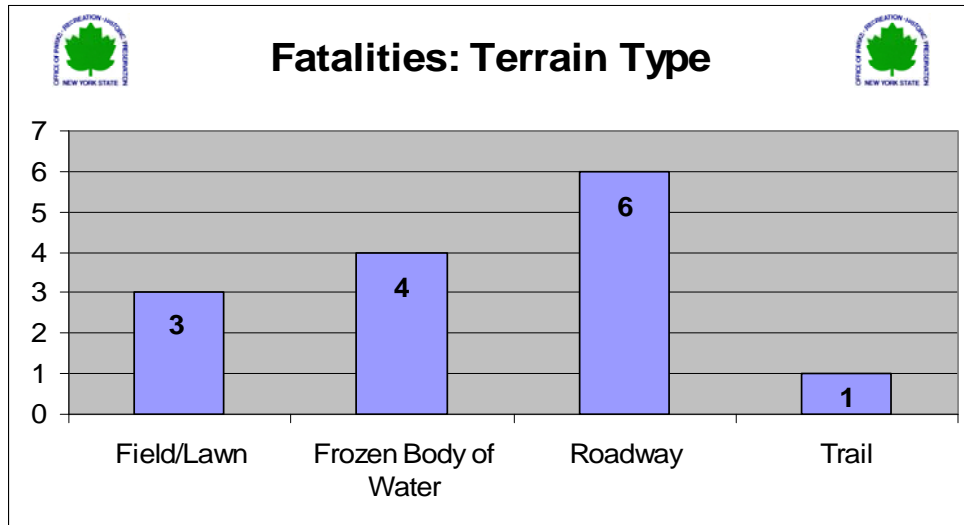
History of Alcohol Related Fatalities from 2005-2010



Victims of Fatalities

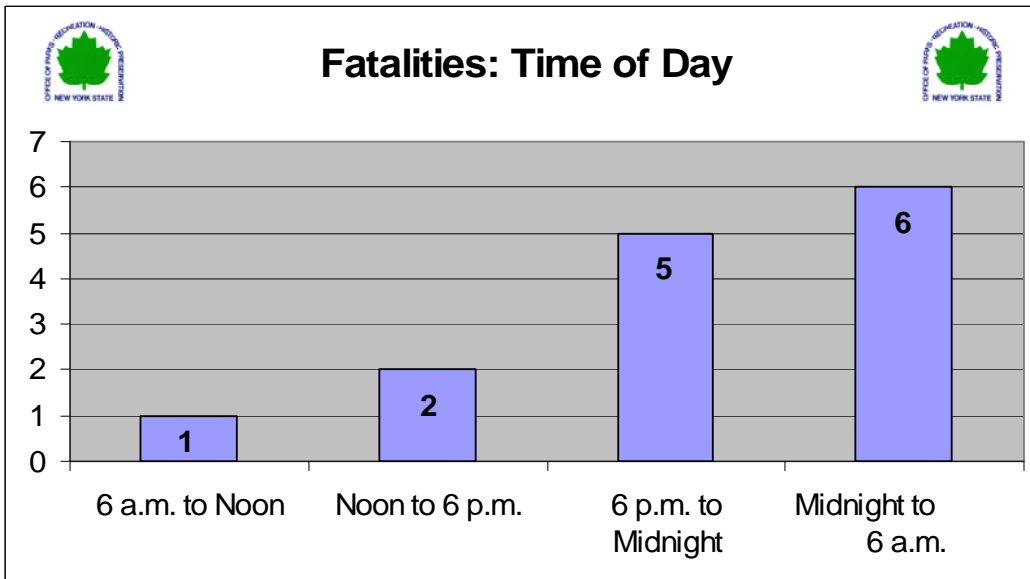
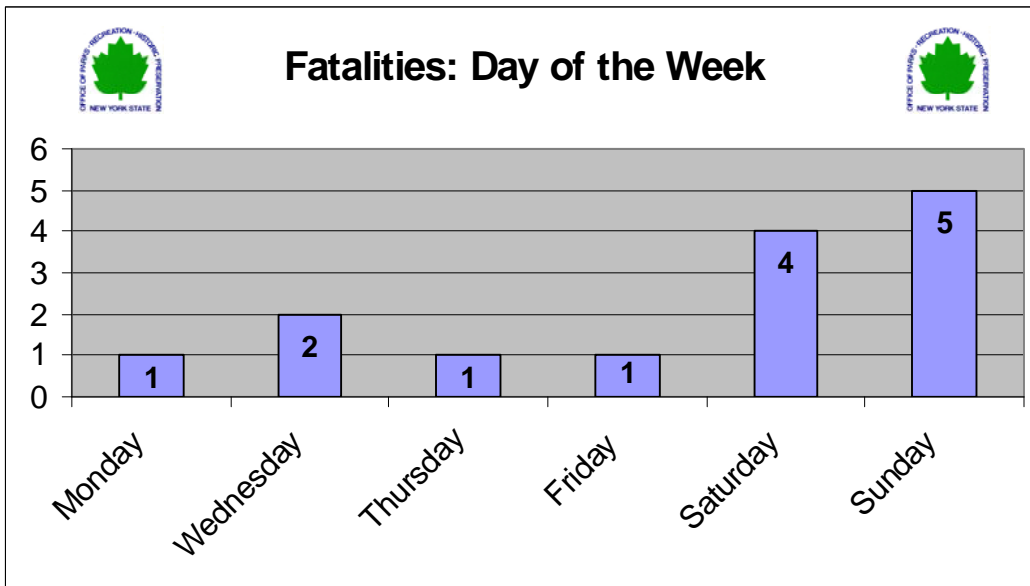
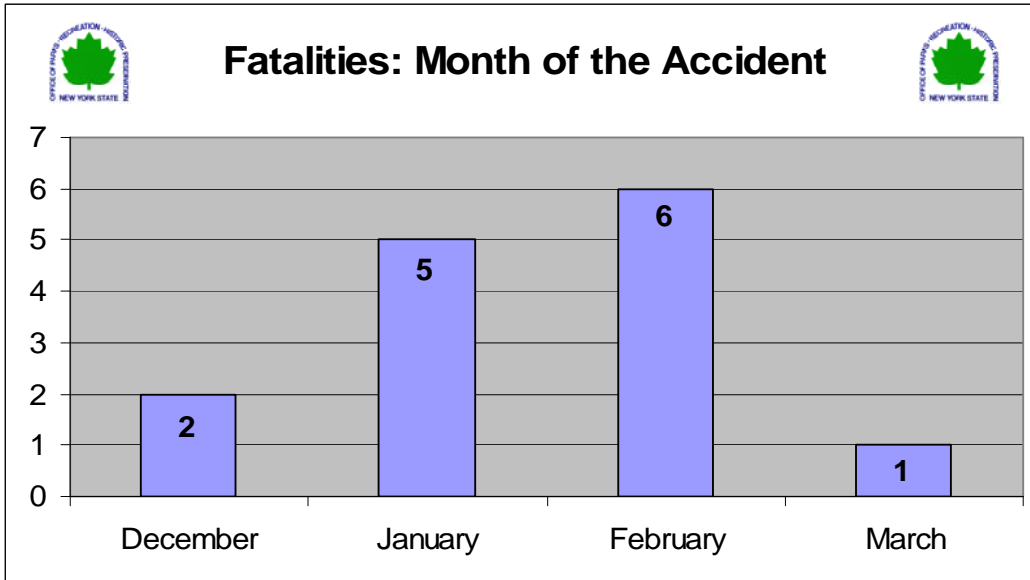


Location of Fatalities



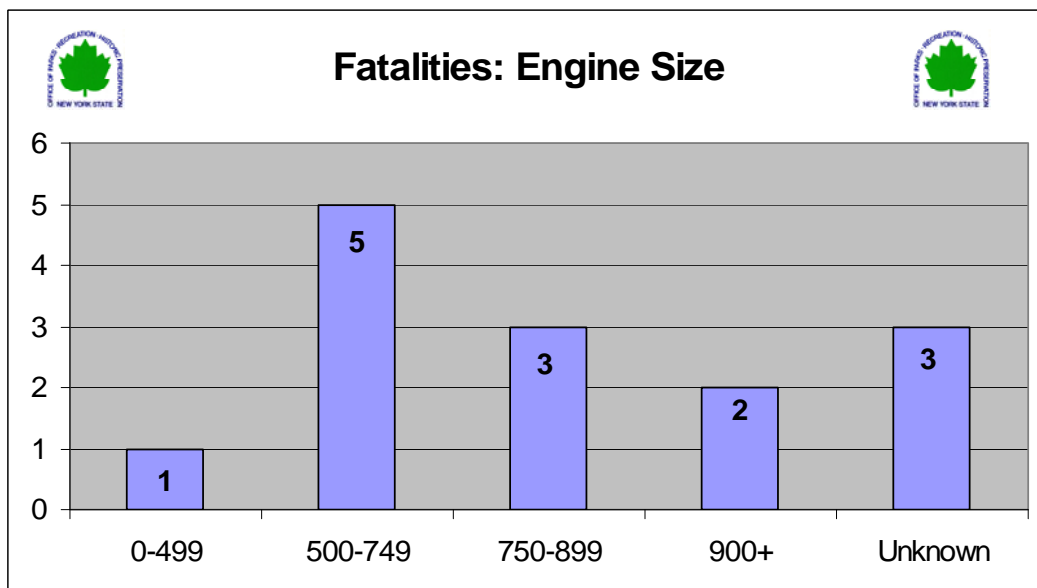
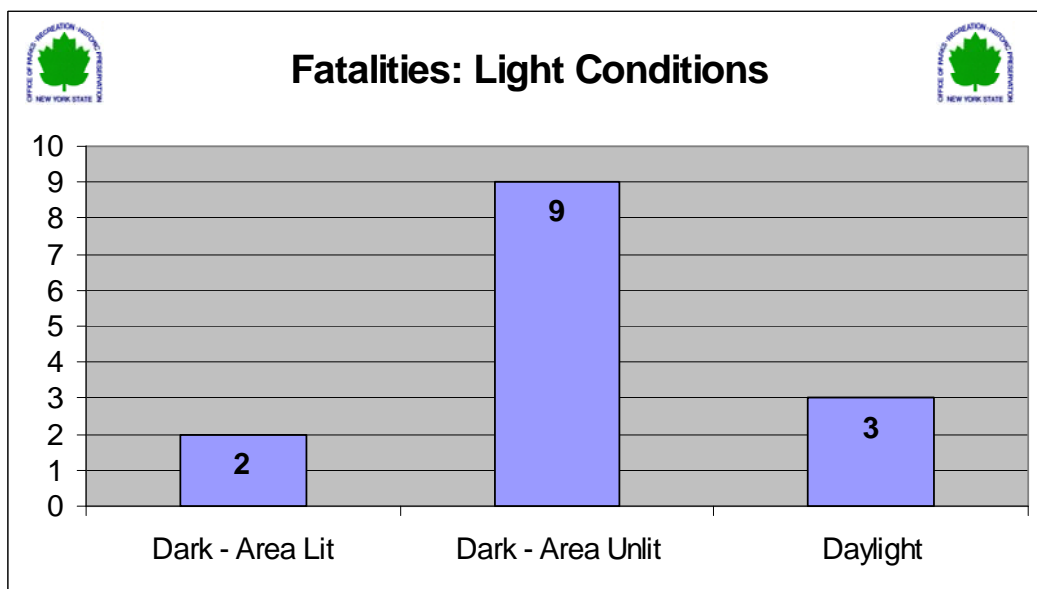
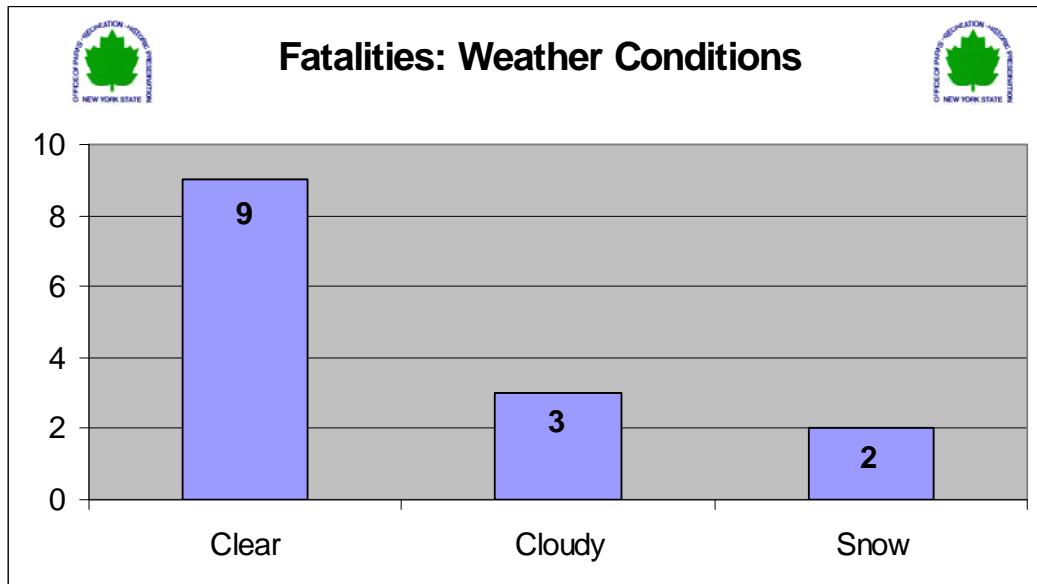
County	Fatalities
Chautauqua	1
Chenango	1
Clinton	1
Columbia	2
Essex	1
Franklin	1
Herkimer	3
Lewis	2
Orange	1
St. Lawrence	1
Total	14

When Fatalities Occurred



Fatalities Time of Day –
 While more accidents happen during daylight hours, the nighttime accidents result in more fatalities.

Other Possible Factors of Fatalities



ZERO ALCOHOL

NYS OPRHP Snowmobile Unit has adopted and supports the IASA Zero Alcohol Campaign



- Alcohol related tragedies are a societal problem.
- Alcohol increases the risk of other factors, such as speed, ice, night riding, and road crossings.
- Impairment starts with the first drink.
- Snowmobiling takes place in an unpredictable and uncontrollable, natural setting.
- Operating a snowmobile is much riskier than driving a car.
- Zero Alcohol means before and during your ride.
- Zero Alcohol is a personal choice.
- Zero Alcohol will save lives and reduce injuries.
- Most snowmobilers already choose to ride alcohol free.
- Zero Alcohol is a good news story that will improve public perception of snowmobiling.