An afternoon of snowmobiling proved to be an expensive life lesson for four Illinois youth.

# Paying the Price

*Story By*
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(Photo by Jim Howard.)

A fun-filled afternoon of snowmobiling quickly turned sour for four young friends.

While routinely patrolling Mercer County deer hunters, CPO Laura Petreikis and CPO Tony Petreikis observed snowmobile headlights on a roadway. A check of the four operators found that the required safety equipment was in place, but all were ticketed for unlawful operation of a snowmobile on a roadway. The adult received a citation for an expired registration, and one youth received a written warning for an expired registration and was told to go directly home for his valid snowmobile decal.

**Forfeiture of a snowmobile is a potential consequence of irresponsible activity.**

(Photo courtesy CPO Laura Petreikis.)

A short time later, a citizen complaint brought the Conservation Police Officers back into the lives of the youths. A Mercer County Sheriff's Deputy and the officers responded quickly, discovering a grizzly scene —the youths had chased down, and repeatedly run over, a white-tailed deer.

In court, the three juveniles were sentenced to a weekend in a juvenile facility, and the 17-year-old spent a weekend in the county jail. Each also received fines of nearly $1,000, an order to undergo a psychological examination and were required to complete 40 hours of community service. And, each forfeited their snowmobile.

"I think three young men discovered that in situations where your friends choose to make a bad decision that you shouldn't go along with them," CPO L. Petreikis remarked. "You always have the option of opting not to participate."

**Responsible snowmobilers practice safe, courteous and ethical behavior while on the trail.**

Knowledge of this experience also provides a lesson for all parents.

"Youth need to be educated about wildlife regulations and should be brought up with a respect for regulations and nature," CPO L. Petreikis continued. "While you can't control every decision your children make, you can set a good example and instill in them a respect for the outdoors that will help guide the decisions they make throughout life."

Officer Tony Petreikis offered one final piece of advise.

"If you break the law you eventually will pay," T. Petreikis concluded. "We might not catch you this time, or the next, or even the 10th time, but sooner or later we'll be at the right place, on the right day and you will be caught. And when we do catch you, you'll be dealt with appropriately. That is our job."