



## Safety Bulletin

### All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety

While generally considered recreational vehicles, ATVs are growing more commonplace as work vehicles by various industries. Whether riding 'just for fun' or on the job, experience and attention to risk management counts when riding an ATV.

Many unnecessary deaths and injuries occur when an inexperienced driver loses control of an ATV, is thrown from the unit, overturns the vehicle, or collides with a fixed object or a motor vehicle. The most common injuries associated with ATV crashes are to the head, face and spine – skull fractures, facial fractures, brain injuries, coma, paralysis and spinal cord injuries. ATV drivers with more than one year of operating experience or those who have completed a safety course have a much lower risk of injury and death than relatively new drivers.

All new ATV riders, regardless of age, are strongly encouraged to take a safety training course, which are offered nationwide and often are free. If a business provides ATVs for employee use, all riders should receive training and/or guidance on safe practices. Employers should also incorporate these practices and policies into formal written safety programs.

To enroll in the *ATV Rider Course* nearest you, visit [www.atvsafety.org](http://www.atvsafety.org) and click on "Online Enrollment" or call 800.887.2887. Another excellent free resource regarding tips for the *ATV Rider & ATV Off-Road Practice Guide* can be downloaded at the following web site: [www.atvsafety.org/InfoSheets/ATV\\_Riding\\_Tips.pdf](http://www.atvsafety.org/InfoSheets/ATV_Riding_Tips.pdf).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is another important aspect of ATV safety, with head protection the most critical component. Select a full-face motorcycle or other motorized sport helmet that is certified by the US DOT and/or by the Snell Memorial Foundation. Helmets should have stickers on the inside or outside confirming compliance with the standards. In addition, over-the-ankle non-skid boots with a defined heel, eye protection or helmet face shield, long pants, gloves, blaze orange or reflective vest, and a long-

sleeved shirt to protect against cuts and abrasions, trees, brush and rocks should be worn.

The majority of ATVs are designed to carry only one person. It is important that the driver be able to shift his or her weight freely in all directions to respond to the varying terrain or riding situation. Passengers can make it difficult for drivers to maneuver and control the ATV. In addition, most ATVs are not equipped with handholds or foot rests for passengers. ATVs should have a warning label reminding the rider not to carry passengers if designed for a single rider.

ATVs should not be driven on paved roads due to the risks of being hit by motor vehicles. In addition, ATVs are prone to rollovers on paved surfaces due to their type of tires and design. For these reasons, some states prohibit ATVs on public roadways. ATVs should be used only during daylight hours. Riding after dark is especially dangerous because lights attached to an ATV cannot provide enough direct illumination when the vehicle is bouncing and turning.

Only tow a trailer if your ATV is designed and equipped to do so. When using an ATV for towing, use extreme caution, as braking capabilities, turning and general handling are affected. Do not allow any passengers in the trailer. Never overload the ATV carrying racks to the point where your vision is blocked and never use the rack as a tow hitch.

Other ATV Safety Tips or Best Practices include:

- Read all ATV warnings, decals and instructions in the Owner's Manual
- Always keep both hands on the handlebars and both feet on the footrests of your ATV during operation. Removing even one hand or foot can reduce your ability to control the ATV, or could cause you to lose your balance and fall off.
- Never use a 3-wheeler. They are unsafe, and for that reason, are no longer manufactured.

- Always maintain a safe distance between your ATV and other ATV riders or motorized vehicles. Tailgating can lead to collisions and injuries.
- Always ride at a safe and responsible speed. Always look well ahead and choose a speed that is proper for the terrain, visibility, operating conditions, and your experience. Know your abilities and don't exceed those levels.
- Do not attempt to ride backward down a hill. Should you begin rolling backward, do not apply the rear brake abruptly. Using the rear brake only or abruptly could cause the ATV to roll over backward.
- Always check the terrain carefully before you start down any hill. Choose a downhill path as straight as possible, with a minimum of obstacles. Shift your weight to the rear and use a low gear.
- Make sure your ATV mechanical equipment (i.e., lights, tires, brakes, etc.) is in top working order; always check your machine before heading out.

- Never operate an ATV under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

ATVs are a very useful means of transportation and can help businesses and their employees perform a variety of tasks. Using common sense and these best practices, businesses can manage the risks of ATV use to keep work activity moving forward and employees safe.

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