

ATV Safety Guideline

Introduction

When operated properly, an ATV can be fun and very useful, but operated carelessly; can make the rider vulnerable to injury, or even death. However, in 2002¹ all terrain vehicle (ATV) crashes caused 357 fatalities (up 67% from 1007) and 113,900 injured riders (more than double the number in 1997). The most common causes for ATV accidents are unsafe speed, drinking and driving, driving on paved roads and into regular traffic, driving in unsafe weather conditions, and driving without proper supervision or training. ATV's are not regulated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and many states do not require an age limit, license, or training to operate an ATV, meaning the responsibility for safe operation in most cases falls directly on the shoulders of the driver.

Follow Safe Operating Procedures developed by ATV manufacturers, outdoor organizations and safety agencies, such as the National Safety Council:

- Read the owner's manual carefully and follow the operating procedures described. Pay special attention to the warnings in the manual and all labels on the machine.
- Do not operate an ATV without proper instruction. Take a training course.
- Be aware of your capabilities. Some adults lack the strength and skill to correct an unstable ATV.
- Always wear an approved motorcycle helmet. Also wear eye-protection, sturdy boots with ankle support, gloves, long pants, and a long sleeved shirt or jacket as conditions warrant.
- Never carry a passenger, which can upset the balance of the ATV and cause you to lose control, unless the ATV is designed for more than one person.
- Never operate an ATV on pavement. They are not designed for use on paved surfaces and may be difficult to control.
- Do not operate an ATV on public streets or highways. Not only can collisions with cars, trucks, and other motor vehicles can be deadly, in most areas it is illegal to operate off-road vehicles on public roads.
- Do not ride at excessive speeds. ATVs are very unstable and easily flip on uneven ground due to their short wheelbase and maneuverability. Use a speed that is proper for the terrain, visibility conditions, and your experience.
- Be especially cautious when approaching hills, turns, and obstacles and when operating on unfamiliar or rough terrain. Keep at least 10 feet between your ATV and other vehicles.

¹ According to information posted on safety.com

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- Do not consume alcohol or drugs before or while operating an ATV.

Before taking an ATV to the field inspect it to ensure:

- The tires are in good condition
- The controls and cable are operational
- The chain has proper slack and is lubricated
- Your riding gear is in good condition

ATV Rider Training classes and additional safety information can be obtained from the ATV Safety Institute, 800-887-2887. See <http://www.dri.edu/ehs-links#fsg> for a link to the Safety Institute and other related sites.