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ATV Safety

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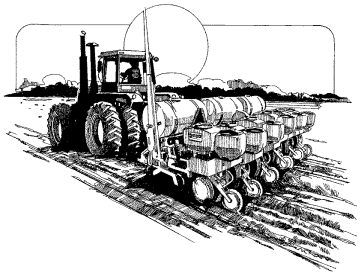
Utah State University Extension

Agricultural Health and Safety
Fact Sheet AHS-12

ATV Safety



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The ATV is a popular form of recreation and a valuable piece of work equipment. Since the mid 1980's, the ATV has found increasing use in agriculture. ATVs provide agriculturalists with convenience and efficiency in transportation as well as for a wide variety of other purposes.

Despite all the wonderful aspects of the ATV, it is important to remember that they can also be hazardous. The use of ATVs has increased since their introduction to the U.S., and so have the associated injuries and deaths. Many of these accidents occur on the farm. This number is expected to grow as the use of ATVs becomes more common in agricultural operations. Farm chores requiring the operation of ATVs are given to children, who often lack proper training, supervision, and do not operate the ATV safely. In most cases, these accidents are as a result of improper use of handling. The following are 10 guidelines to ensure the safe use of an ATV.

- **Wear personal protective equipment.**

  Helmet. The most vital piece of protective gear is the helmet. A helmet should be approved by one or more of the following agencies: DOT, ANSI, or the Snell Memorial Foundation. Look for a helmet with a snug fit that fastens securely. Without the protection of a helmet, the risk of severe injury greatly increases.

  Goggles or face shield. You must be able to see clearly in order to ride safely. Dirt, rocks, bugs, and branches in your eyes impair your vision while riding and can cause blindness. Don't wear sunglasses.

  Gloves. The use of gloves will provide the operator with a better grip and protection against cut and scratches. Gloves increase the operators control of the ATV and alleviate discomfort in the hands and wrists.

  Boots. Leather high-top boots offer the best protection from debris. Boots help the operator to maintain proper foot placement on the footrest or pegs. Never ride bare footed. Long pants or trousers and a long sleeve shirt provide the rider with added protection.

- **Ride the recommended size of ATV.**

  Children under the age of 12 years should not operate an ATV or be permitted to ride one. An engine size of 90 cc is the **maximum** for youth between 12 and 16 years of age. They simply do not have the physical size to operate adult-size vehicles safely. Make sure you fit the ATV before riding. Are the controls within your reach?

Can you maneuver the vehicle? When standing, are there three inches clearance between you and the seat?

- **Follow all manufacturer safety guidelines.** Read the owners manual thoroughly. Become familiar with the ATV before operating. Regularly check the tires for adequate air pressure, cuts or gouges. Check the controls and cables, lights and electrics, oil and fuel levels, and the chain and drive shaft chassis to ensure they are working properly.

- **Never carry a passenger.** An ATV is designed to carry only the driver. Passengers impede the operator's ability to shift their weight, adjust their position, and maneuver the ATV safely. Carrying a passenger on an ATV may also upset the balance of the ATV and cause it to go out of control.

- **Never use drugs or drink alcohol while riding.** Operating an ATV requires the full attention of the rider. Drugs and alcohol reduce the riders ability to maintain proper control and increases the likelihood of an accident.

- **Enroll in a safety course.** Hands-on training should be received from a qualified instructor. Never lend your ATV to someone who has not taken a safety training course.

- **Supervise young riders.** Ensure that young riders are always under the supervision of a responsible adult.

- **Ride only ATVs with four wheels.** Four wheels are much more stable than are three wheels. Balance is easier to maintain on an ATV with four wheels reducing the risk of rolling over.

- **Obey laws and regulations.** Know and understand local and state laws governing the use of ATVs.

- **Never ride on paved roads.** The ATV is not designed to be use on paved surfaces and may be difficult to control. Never drive on public roads such as streets or highways. Travel at moderate speeds and during daylight hours. Never attempt to do jumps or other stunts.

Whether you ride an ATV for recreation or work, keep safety a priority. Being smart and riding safely reduces injuries and helps to ensure that you ride another day.

References

http://research.marshfieldclinic.org/children/Resources/ATV/FactSheet.htm

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www.cdc.gov/niosh

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4-H ATV Rider Handbook

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