

MAFES Dawg Tracks



July 21, 2008

All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety



The popularity of ATVs continue to grow every day, in both work and recreation environments. The first ATVs were first made in Japan for use in the rough, mountainous regions. As they were first introduced into the US, the predominant use was totally for recreation, but it didn't take long for the agricultural industry to pick up on the idea for their use in chores around the farm. Today sales continue to grow, as does the number of injuries and deaths.

Operated carefully, ATVs are a lot of fun. But by the same token, if they are operated carelessly, it makes the rider or operator "vulnerable" to injury or maybe death.

According to *safety.com*, in 2002, ATV crashes resulted in 357 fatalities and 113,000 injuries to riders. The number of fatalities jumped 67% from 1997, and the number doubled in injuries. Research has indicated major factors that lead to injuries include driver misuse and inappropriate rider behavior. Also, other risk factors that can lead to injuries are excessive speeds, accepting passengers and improper supervision or training.

When operating all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) proper training, proper protective equipment and full comprehension of the machine are necessary. No matter what function the ATV is performing, the machine is no better than the person operating it. The responsibility for careful operation lies entirely with the operator. The National Highway Traffic Safety Association is not required to regulate ATVs. Many states do not require an age limit, license or training to operate an ATV.

Manufacturers, outdoor organizations and safety agencies do their best to inform ATV users of the safe operating procedures such as:

- Read the owner's manual and follow the operating procedures described. Pay special attention to the warning labels throughout the manuals and labels attached on the machine.
- Do not operate an ATV without proper instruction. Take a training course; it's not a toy.
- Do not let children ride an adult-size ATV. They lack the skill and strength to correct an unstable ATV weighing 500 to 1,000 lbs and capable of running at 55 mph or more.
- No child under 12 years old should be allowed on any ATV. Children 12-16 yrs. of age should ride a machine with an engine size of 90cc or less.
- Always wear an approved helmet, eye protection, boots with ankle support, gloves, long pants, long sleeved shirt and a jacket, depending on weather conditions.
- Never carry a passenger, which can upset the balance of the machine and cause you to lose control.
- Do not operate an ATV on pavement. They are not designed for use on hard roads.
- Do not operate an ATV on any public roads, gravel or dirt. Collisions with most any motor vehicle can result in sudden death or disabling injuries.
- Do not ride at excessive speeds. With their short wheelbase and maneuverability, they are unstable and will flip over easily on uneven ground.
- Be especially cautious on hills, curves and uneven terrain. Maintain at least 10 feet between you and other vehicles.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs before or while operating an ATV.

INSPECTION IDEAS BEFORE EACH USE:

- Are the tires and wheels in good condition?
- Are the controls and cables in good condition?
- Does the chain have the proper slack and is it well lubricated?
- Is the riding gear, including a helmet, available and worn?

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Excerpts: www.nsc.org / www.safety.com 3/17/2008

~IF YOU CAN'T BE GOOD, BE CAREFUL~
~IF YOU CAN'T BE CAREFUL~
~DON'T WORRY, THE EMT'S WILL GET A CALL~