

OVERVIEW:

An ATV is a small vehicle that is designed for use on rough, unpaved ground. It is equipped with four large tires with very low air pressure. An ATV operator uses body movements to help control the ATV, so a combination of skill, good judgment and physical strength are necessary elements for safe operation.

The most common causes of ATV-related injuries are:

- Driving on or across a highway
- Driving with a passenger on board
- Refusing to wear a helmet
- Insufficient training for the driver
- Use of older, unsafe models, or improperly maintained ATVs



PROTECTIVE GEAR:

ATV protective gear is important for anyone who rides an all-terrain vehicle for work, and will help prevent injury from flying debris as well as harsh weather conditions. Protective gear may include the following:

- **A helmet** – Head injuries are common in ATV accidents, and wearing a helmet may reduce the severity of these types of injuries, making the difference between a concussion or a permanent brain injury or even death.
- **Safety glasses** – Safety glasses protect your eyes from flying debris, rocks and bugs that can damage your eyes.
- **Gloves** – Gloves can help keep your hands from going numb from cold or harsh winds, which is important as it allows you to have maximum mobility in operating the controls.
- **Long Pants/Long Sleeves** – Long clothes will prevent your arms and legs from getting scratched or cut by bushes, and flying debris, and also provide protection against the effects of harsh weather conditions such as frostbite or sunburn.
- **Boots** – Your feet are used to maintain control and balance on the ATV, so the soles should be non-slippery.

PRE-RIDE CHECK:

Become familiar with the manufacturer's manual, and follow the guidelines given. A pre-ride inspection is done in two parts: first, when the ATV is turned off, and second, with the engine turned on.

First, with the ATV turned off, check the following:

- Are there any recent problems or warnings indicated in the maintenance records?
- Are the fuel and oil at adequate levels?
- Is the tire pressure on all four tires at the recommended level? Check that the bolts on the tires are tight, and check the tires for signs of obvious wear.
- Is the helmet in good condition? Does it have a face shield for protection from flying debris?
- Are a first aid kit and a tire repair kit onboard?
- Check for signs of wear or breaks in the cables and lines.

Second, start the ignition and check the following:

- Do the headlights work?
- Test the brakes on level ground, going slowly. You should be able to stop smoothly.

ATV OPERATION AND SAFETY:

ATVs handle differently than other vehicles, and so it is important to be properly trained in basic ATV operation and safety to help you maintain control. Never drive in a manner that endangers other people or their property.

Learn how to shift your weight and maintain an appropriate speed when going up or down hill, and when turning. ATVs are unstable and can easily flip on uneven ground. Always scan the terrain ahead for obstacles, other vehicles, people or animals. Be sure to reduce speed to a maximum of 15 miles per hour if you see a potential hazard in the road ahead, or if a bend in the road creates a blind turn.

Never carry a passenger, unless the ATV is specifically designed to do so.

There is no spare tire on an ATV; therefore, you should always carry a repair kit. This kit should include a pump or a canister of compressed air.

In addition, the ATV should be equipped with a basic first aid kit and a two-way radio or cell phone.

POST-RIDE CHECK:

ATVs need regular maintenance because they take a lot of wear and tear. Regular maintenance will help to identify minor problems before they become major mechanical issues.

Each ATV in the workplace should have a maintenance log book that lists all inspections and repairs. Additionally, a tag system on the ATV's ignition is useful in identifying whether the ATV has a serious safety problem and is not operational (such as the brakes aren't functioning properly), or a minor safety problem that requires restricted use (such as the headlights are not working so the ATV can only be operated during daylight hours).

CONCLUSION:

ATVs are useful in agricultural operations and can be safe if used properly. Remember the following safety guidelines:

- Wear safety gear including a helmet and eye protection
- Do not drive an ATV with a passenger, or ride as a passenger unless the ATV is specifically designed to accommodate passengers
- Do not drive on paved roads or highways
- Service the ATV regularly, and have a tag system for inspections
- Do not exceed recommended speed limits
- Do not turn too quickly
- Give pedestrians the right of way

