

ATVing for the Entire Family

Since their introduction to the public several decades ago, ATVs have become increasingly popular. They are very appealing to riders because of the amount of excitement one feels as they are riding. People are now discovering that the whole family can enjoy the excitement of the ATV. On the negative side, though, people are often injured while ATVing, and because of this, it is vitally important that adults do everything they can to ensure the safety of both themselves and their children.

To drive an ATV safely, one needs to be strong, skilled, and, most important, mature. This is why children who are younger than 16 years of age should never operate an ATV. Adults must not forget that it also takes strength and stamina to be a passenger. A rider who is sitting behind the driver must be able to hold on tight for a long period. Often, they must hold on while the ATV goes over very bumpy ground at a high speed. The rule of thumb is that any child who is younger than six years old should never be allowed to ride as a passenger on an ATV.

It is probably not surprising to discover that head injuries are one of the causes of both death and serious injury on ATVs. These serious injuries usually occur when ATVers crash, fall, or overturn while moving. It should be remembered that children can also be injured if they are towed by an ATV during winter months while they are on a sled, tube, tire, or other device that is being pulled by an ATV. In Canada, statistics show that four children younger than 16 years of age die in recreational vehicle related accidents each year.

So, the question becomes: how can ATVs be used safely so that they are enjoyed by each and every member of the family who is old enough to do so? If your family happens to own an ATV, be sure that no one under the age of 16 is ever allowed to drive it. Again, it is tremendously important that you never allow any children younger than six years of age to ride as passengers. If you are a parent who owns and operates an ATV, consider following these rules to be an excellent opportunity to model the type of safe behavior you want your children to display.

Before you head out on your ATV adventure, be sure to be careful when fueling the ATV. Burns are possible, and you want to avoid them. Be sure to use the proper lifting methods when loading ATVs on and off trailers. This will help you prevent strains and crush injuries. Make sure that you check the weather forecast before you go out. It is probably not a good idea to venture out if a major storm is brewing. Also, make sure that you check the condition of the trails. Depending on how mountainous the area in which you will be ATVing is, you may want to assess whether there is danger of an accident. In the winter, always be sure to avoid ATVing on ice if you are not 100% certain that the ice is very thick.

You should also be able to identify the signs of hypothermia if you are ATVing in the wintertime, and know what to do if it does occur. Make sure that you

always travel with the right equipment. You will want to have well-insulated protective clothing, such as goggles, waterproof suits and gloves, and rubber-bottomed boots. Of course, you need to make sure that everyone who will be riding is wearing a helmet approved for ATVing. Another thing you can do to ensure the safety of you and your family is to attach brightly colored antenna flags to your ATV. You will definitely want to do this if you are driving in a particularly hilly area.

Of course, the most important thing you can do to ensure your family's safety is to drive carefully. Use wisdom and caution. If you have followed the preceding guidelines, you will find that ATVing is a very exciting sport that can be enjoyed by members of your entire family.

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Word count 695