Top 9 Things Every Rider Must Know About ATVs:

1. In 2003, there were an estimated 740 deaths associated with ATVs, including 140 reported deaths that involved children. In 2004, an estimated 136,000 ATV-related injuries were treated in hospital emergency rooms.
2. About one-third of ATV-related deaths and injuries involve children. Anyone younger than 16 years of age should never be on an adult ATV.
3. ATVs are not toys! They are powerful and potentially dangerous vehicles.
4. ATVs can travel at speeds in excess of 60 miles per hour and can weigh in excess of 700 pounds.
5. ATVs can easily roll and tip over. Their unpredictable nature in off-road conditions makes training and proper use essential.
6. All riders should always wear a helmet when on an ATV.
7. Stay off paved roads and avoid unfamiliar terrain.
8. Never carry a passenger on a single-rider ATV.
9. Do not drive an ATV while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

More Information about Staying Safe When Riding

Like other activities involving high speeds and heavy machinery, riding an ATV can be risky. To help stay safe, follow common sense safety tips. Take knowledge to the extreme and learn more about these important tips for safer riding:

- Get Trained
- Wear a helmet
- No children on adult ATVs
- Don’t ride tandem
- Don’t ride on pavement
- Don’t ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs
Take a Hands-On Safety Training Course

Formal training teaches drivers how to control ATVs in typical situations. Drivers with formal, hands-on ATV training have a lower injury risk than drivers with no formal training.

Learning to drive an ATV can be challenging. Many deaths and injuries occur when an inexperienced driver loses control of an ATV, is thrown from an ATV, overturns the vehicle, or collides with a fixed object or a motor vehicle. Good ATV training teaches new drivers how to handle multiple off-road riding situations.

Experienced ATV drivers (with more than one year of experience) have a much lower risk of injury than relatively new drivers. Training can help bridge that gap. Yet, less than 10% of all ATV drivers and only about one-quarter of new drivers receive professional training.

All ATV drivers, including children under 16, should take a hands-on ATV safety course from a certified instructor. These courses are offered by the ATV Safety Institute, local ATV rider groups, some state departments of natural resources, state highway departments, and other agencies responsible for regulating ATV use. The National 4-H Council also sponsors educational seminars on safe riding for children and teenagers.

ATV manufacturers and distributors who are members of the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA) offer free training as well as cash awards and incentives to buyers who complete the ATV Safety Institute training course. Children under 16 can take the course only if they are on an age-appropriate ATV. Children younger than 12 who take the course must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian for the training.
Always Wear Protective Gear - Especially a Helmet – When Riding ATVs

Many ATV injuries are head injuries. Wearing a helmet may reduce the severity of these injuries. Select a motorcycle or other motorized sports helmet and make sure the helmet is certified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and/or the Snell Memorial Foundation. In addition, wear over-the-ankle boots, goggles, gloves, long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt to protect against cuts, abrasions, and other injuries from rocks, trees, and other debris.

Many states require riders to wear helmets. CPSC, as well as the ATV Safety Institute, recommends that ATV riders use motorcycle or other motorized sports helmets that are certified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and/or the Snell Memorial Foundation (Snell). Other important protective equipment to wear while riding an ATV includes:

- Over-the-ankle boots – to protect feet and ankles from injury.
- Goggles – to protect eyes from rocks and dust thrown up by ATVs.
- Gloves – to protect fingers and hands.
- Long pants and long-sleeved shirt – to protect skin from rocks, trees, and other debris.
Do Not Drive ATVs with a Passenger or Ride as a Passenger

The majority of ATVs are designed to carry only one person. ATVs are designed for interactive riding – drivers must be able to shift their weight freely in all directions, depending on the situation and terrain. Interactive riding is critical to maintaining safe control of an ATV especially on varying terrain. Passengers can make it difficult for drivers to control the ATV.

ATVs are designed for interactive riding. This means the driver’s body movement plays an integral part of the handling. The driver must be able to shift his or her weight freely in all directions. If passengers get in the way or shift their weight improperly, the driver may not be able to safely control the ATV. In addition, most ATVs are not equipped with handholds or footrests for passengers.

Single rider ATVs display a warning label to remind drivers not to carry passengers. New “2-Up” ATVs on the market are specifically designed to carry a driver with a single passenger. According to manufacturers, these ATVs should never be used to carry children under 12 or to carry more than one passenger.

Do Not Drive ATVs on Paved Roads

ATVs – because of how they’re made – are difficult to control on paved roads. Collisions with cars and other vehicles also can be deadly. Many fatalities involving ATVs occur on paved roads.

ATVs should not be driven on paved roads. ATVs on paved roads are at risk of being hit by cars and other vehicles. While passenger vehicles contain safety features designed to protect occupants from collisions, ATVs do not. If struck by other vehicles, ATV riders can be killed or severely injured.

In addition, most ATVs have low pressure tires and a solid rear axle, where both wheels turn at the same speed. When making a turn, the ATV's inside rear wheel is intended to skid because its path length is less than the path length of the outside wheel. ATVs on paved surfaces have much better traction, which prevents the necessary skidding. This can make turning an ATV on paved surfaces unpredictable and unstable.

For these reasons, some states and local areas prohibit ATVs and other off-road vehicles on public streets and highways.
Do Not Permit Children to Drive or Ride Adult ATVs

Children are involved in about one-third of all ATV-related deaths and hospital emergency room injuries. Most of these deaths and injuries occur when a child is driving or riding on an adult ATV. Children under 16 on adult ATVs are twice as likely to be injured as those riding youth ATVs.

Children under 16 years old lack the developmental skills to safely drive adult ATVs. These ATVs – with engine sizes over 90 cubic centimeters (cc) – can go over 70 mph and weigh hundreds of pounds. Current industry and CPSC recommendations are for children and young teens to be restricted to ATVs with engine sizes of 90 cc or below.

Children under 6 should never be on an ATV – either as a driver or passenger. Young children lack the physical ability and mental skills to safely maneuver a motorized vehicle with multiple speeds and controls.

Most ATVs are equipped with a label detailing the manufacturer’s and CPSC’s recommended age for that particular model. The recommended ages for Y-6 models (under 70 cc engines) are 6 to 11; the recommended ages for the Y-12 models (70 to 90 cc engines) are 12 to 15.

By age 6, some children can drive youth ATVs with simple controls at very low speeds. Many young children cannot grasp gear shifting or understand and apply most safety rules – especially in situations where quick recall is needed. A Y-6 ATV is designed to go up to 15 miles per hour; however, Y-6 ATVs are equipped with a device that can limit the speed to 10 miles per hour.

By ages 12 to 13, many children can drive youth ATVs at speeds under 25 mph. These children generally lack the cognitive skills to control adult ATVs under a wide range of conditions. Even many older, more experienced adolescents cannot make quick, accurate judgments while driving ATVs. A Y-12 ATV is designed to go up to 30 mph; however, Y-12 ATVs are equipped with a device that can limit the speed to 15 mph.

For additional information visit:

♦ www.ATVsafety.gov - the above information has been adapted from this website
♦ www.chandlersatvlaw.com – for information on South Carolina’s ATV laws

This handout was developed to help individuals understand more about injury prevention measures. It is meant to be used as a guide. Please consult the manufacturer’s instructions and/or your healthcare provider if you have any questions.