

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV): Useful, fun... dangerous

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are a familiar site on farms, in big backyards, and anywhere people can ride for fun. Four-wheelers can be useful for hauling equipment or getting from one place to another quickly. But their increased use has also led to more serious injuries and deaths. The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that about 650 deaths and 100,000 injuries happen each year in the U.S. related to ATVs.

All-terrain vehicles are fast and responsive, but they're also heavy and powerful, and can easily tip over, trapping people underneath or causing collisions.

Getting Ready to Ride

- ATVs are designed and built for specific uses and applications. Never modify an ATV as it can affect braking, steering, and stability.
- Always follow manufacturer specifications for operation and maintenance.
- Keep your ATV in good condition at all times, including controls, brakes, cables, and tires.
- Because of their size and power, 26% of all ATV accidents involve children and teens.
 - The National Safety Council reports that ATVs with an engine size of 70cc to 90cc should only be operated by someone at least 12 years old.
 - ATVs with an engine size over 90cc should only be operated by people who are at least 16 years old.
 - All drivers under age 16 should be supervised by an adult.
- Regardless of age, all operators should be trained using a course from the ATV Safety Institute or similar instruction.
- The Centers for Disease Control have an information sheet for ATV use during work at <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2012-167>.
- Wear appropriate riding gear at all times. This includes DOT-ANSI-approved helmets, goggles, gloves, over-the-ankle boots, a long-sleeve shirt, and long pants.

When Riding

- Follow the same rules as motor vehicles when driving. However, ATVs are intended only for off-road use and don't mix with motor vehicles. To avoid collisions, ATVs should never be operated on the road. The ATV and driver will always lose.
- Never operate an ATV after drinking alcohol or consuming other substances that can impair judgement and reaction time.
- Don't drive an ATV while distracted. A collision with an object or losing control of an ATV can happen in less than a second.
- Never allow a passenger on an ATV unless the manufacturer included an additional seat for a passenger.
- Children should avoid riding with other non-adults at all times to avoid dangerous distractions.

Avoiding Rollovers

- Rollovers are the most common cause for ATV accidents. Follow these basic rules at all times:
 - Always know your terrain. Many hills are too steep for your ability or the ATV. Use your common sense and avoid hills that are too high to climb, are slippery, or that require traversing (riding sideways across hills).
 - When going uphill, stay alert for vehicles traveling on the other side of the hill, and be aware of what you will find on the far side of the hill.
 - Keep your weight and load balanced at all times.
 - Don't try to roll downhill if you lose momentum. Stop safely, apply the parking brake, and dismount on the uphill side before following the ATV owner's manual's instructions on safely moving downhill.