

All Terrain Vehicle Accidents

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All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are not just for recreation, they're used in many businesses settings including property maintenance, law enforcement, mosquito control, land surveying and farming. An ATV is a four-wheeled, self-propelled vehicle with low-pressure tires manufactured for use on off-highway trails and can travel up to 75 MPH.

Over the last few years accidents, which resulted in injuries and deaths associated with ATV use, have increased. The American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons estimates that ATV-related injuries cost billions of dollars annually in the form of medical bills, disability payments, and lost economic productivity. With proper preparation and the appropriate training, the possibility of ATV accidents occurring can be significantly reduced.

Some Safety Issues to Consider

- Selecting an ATV:** if your company uses ATVs as part of their operations, select an ATV that matches your company needs. An ATV may not be the most appropriate vehicle for the job. All-wheel drive street vehicles and vehicles with rollover protective structures (ROPS) offer greater stability and operator protection. A ROPS is a cab or frame that provides a safe environment for the vehicle operator in the event of a rollover and must pass a series of moving and non-moving crush tests. If an ATV is equipped with an ROPS, ensure your employees wear their seat belt.
- Head Protection:** employers should ensure that each rider wear a snugly-fitted helmet with a safety face shield at all times. Only American National Standards Institute (ANSI), Department of Transportation, or Snell Memorial Foundation helmets should be worn. Helmets used for bicycling or rollerblading should never be worn. Always replace any helmet following an accident. An ANSI approved pair of goggles with hard-coated polycarbonate lenses can be used as a substitute for a face shield.
- Body Protection:** proper-fitting gloves protect the operator's hands from the elements, prevent blisters, and can improve grip. Durable long sleeve shirts or jackets as well as long pants protect operators from sticks, branches, and trail debris. "Off-the-road" boots or motorcycle boots are best; however, the boots should have a substantial ankle support.
- Operator Training:** when selecting an ATV, it is essential to fit the rider to the equipment. Once you select an ATV, ensure every driver attends a manufacturer's authorized safety training course. No one should be permitted to operate an ATV unless they have been properly trained.
- Distractions**—Just as cell phones distract drivers, distractions while operating an ATV can also be hazardous or fatal.



Pre-Start Safety Inspection Check List

Prior to operating an ATV, a pre-start inspection should be done, checking for the following:

- + Proper tire pressure
- + Throttle and brakes operating properly
- + Safety guards in place
- + Personal safety equipment worn

Additional Monthly Maintenance Inspection Check List

- + Cuts or gouges in tires
- + Controls and cables in good condition
- + Lights and electrical system functioning properly
- + Fluid levels adequate
- + Drive system inspected, adjusted, and lubricated as needed
- + Nuts or bolts tightened, not loose

Follow these Safe Operating Rules

1. **Obstruction Hazards:** scan the environment to identify potential hazards along the trail. Fallen trees, low-lying branches, uneven terrain, fences, pipelines, and guy-wires (metal wire used to stabilize tall structures) are some of the hazards and most common accident sources that can be encountered while riding an ATV. Stay clear of ditches, embankments, stumps, rocks, and other obstacles.

2. **Weather Conditions:** because weather can affect the safe operation of ATVs, special precautions should be taken when operating an ATV under wet, rainy or foggy conditions. Operators should drive at slower speeds, check for standing water and stay clear from flash flood areas.

3. **Speed:** reduce speed on rough, uneven ground or in areas where holes or stumps might be located. Decrease speed on slopes where the major hazards are often unseen depressions, rocks, and stumps. Turn slowly as sudden turns can create an unstable condition due to centrifugal force. When operating an unfamiliar ATV, drive at a much slower speed than normal until you gain experience with the controls and the way the vehicle behaves.



4. **Stability:** avoid turning uphill when operating on grades or slopes. If it is necessary to turn uphill, slow down and turn as gradually as possible to avoid rolling over. If pulling a load, always hitch the load only to the vehicle's draw bar; do not hitch anything to the ATV's axle.

Additional ATV Safety Resources

For more information on ATV safety, contact your local ATV dealer, the manufacturer, an LWCC safety services consultant or one of the following organizations:

Motorcycle Safety Foundation: <http://www.msf-usa.org>

The motorcycle safety foundation is a national, nonprofit organization of manufacturers and distributors and provides ATV training. Some training is provided at no or reduced cost.

The All-Terrain Vehicle Safety Institute (ASI): <http://www.atvsafety.org>

The ASI, a non-profit division of the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, was formed in 1988 to implement an expanded national program for all-terrain vehicle safety and awareness.

