

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety

As part of our dedication to promoting safety to IWSF members, we have compiled the following list of safety tips from various sources. We hope you find them helpful to increase your awareness in the use and operation of your ATV. Following these guidelines could help reduce your risk of injury.

- Age and experience: Driver error and loss of control are common causes of ATV crashes. Children younger than 16 years old should not operate ATVs. They don't have the strength, skills or experience to handle ATVs safely.
- Read all instruction manuals and follow the manufacturers' recommendations for use, maintenance, and pre-use checks. Always read your Operator's Guide, Safety Handbook and all labels carefully and follow the operating procedures described; watch an ATV Safety Video.
- Pre-Ride Inspection: Inspecting the condition of your ATV before each ride is very important to minimize the chance of injury and maximize the enjoyment of your ride. It also helps ensure long term performance of your ATV. Follow the owner's manual guide to inspection and maintenance of your ATV. A well maintained ATV will give you years of enjoyment.
- Always wear protective gear. Helmets are especially important in reducing the risk of head injury. ATV drivers should always wear an approved helmet for ATVs, eye protection, and proper clothing, such as boots, gloves and long pants.
- Do not operate at excessive speeds or after dark.
- Do not operate an ATV if you have taken drugs or alcohol, it is not only dangerous it is illegal. According to the CPSC, 30 percent of all fatal ATV accidents involved alcohol use.
- Four-wheeled vehicles: Injuries are more likely to occur on three-wheeled ATVs, which are more unstable than four-wheeled vehicles. Never operate a 3-wheeler.
- Do not carry passengers: ATVs are meant to be used by a single driver. Passengers are not recommended because they can affect the balance and make it hard for the driver to stay in control. Children should never ride as passengers on ATVs.
- Training: ATV drivers should take an approved training course.
- ATV's should never be operated on public roads or paved surfaces. ATVs should be operated only on designated trails.
- Be alert to changing terrain conditions; check for obstacles before operating in a new area. Be cautious of excessively rough, slippery or loose terrain. Never attempt to operate over large obstacles such as large rocks or fallen trees.
- Always follow proper procedures for climbing, descending and crossing hills; check terrain before you start. Don't attempt a hill too steep for the ATV or your abilities.
- Never operate an ATV in fast flowing water or in water deeper than that specified in the Operator's Guide and the Safety Handbook. Remember that wet brakes may have reduced stopping ability.

- Always be sure there are no obstacles or people behind you when you operate in reverse. When it is safe to proceed in reverse, go slowly.
- Use antenna flags and wear bright clothing to increase your visibility to others.
- Carry a first-aid pack with you. Your vehicle repair kit should include the manufacturer's tool kit as well as some wire, tape, elastic cords, and possibly locking pliers and a tow rope.
- Carry some food and a water supply with you.
- Watch out for thin ice which may be camouflaged by snow.
- Obey the law: Learn the ATV laws in your state and those in the areas you will be riding. Knowledge of the laws will not only help keep you safe but it may help you avoid an expensive ticket or worse.
- Obey the rules: It is your responsibility to obey posted signs and stay on the trails. The quickest way for you to be banned from most riding areas is to fail to follow the trail rules and signs. Also, venturing from marked trails can result in a rider coming face to face with unexpected obstacles such as ditches, drop offs, cliffs, trees, etc.
- Watch your speed: Always ride at a safe and responsible speed. Riding at excessive speeds not only endangers you but others around you.
- Maintain a safe distance: Always maintain a safe distance between riders. Tailgating can lead to collisions and injuries just as it does with automobiles on the road. Give the rider in front of you some space. You never know when they will have to stop quickly or turn sharply to avoid an obstacle.
- Ride with others: This does not mean carry a passenger. Ride with other ATV operators and always let someone know where you are riding. Never ride alone.
- Check the weather: Be informed of local weather conditions. Many of us forget that the weather has a dramatic affect on the trails we ride. Rain makes trails muddy and slick, snow hides obstacles and ice, sun causes burns and dehydration, etc. Dress and equip yourself appropriately for the weather.
- Know the area you ride in: Be aware of a riding area's potential hazards. Are there hidden obstacles on the trails? How deep is that water? How steep is that hill? The better you know the terrain and trails in the area you will be riding the safer you will be. If you don't know the area, find someone who does and ride with them the first few trips. Not only will you be safer but you will learn the trails quicker.
- Use maps and compass if you are riding in an unfamiliar area. Carry a map of the trail or area you intend to travel. It is no fun to get lost. Getting lost can result in your trying to navigate areas above your skill level in an attempt to get back. If you can't get a map get a GPS. Most modern GPS's have a "track back" feature that will allow you to retrace your ride and get back to where you started. Make a mental note of landmarks; you may need them if you are stranded. If you are lost at night, do not move around. You will waste valuable fuel that you can use to ride safely in the daylight.
- Use common sense: If all else fails, ask your-self, should I do this? If the answer is NO or I AM NOT SURE then DON'T do it.

If you have a safety tip that you would like to share with others, send it to us and we will add it to this list.

***These safety tips are only guidelines.**

IWSF
Safety is no accident