

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) safety guide

The following safety guidelines will help reduce the risk of injury when using all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

Training and policy guidelines

- Train employees to operate every ATV safely under a wide variety of conditions.
- Establish an ATV maintenance program that meets the manufacturer's recommendations for proper ATV performance. Provide easy access to a low-pressure tire gauge and a manufacturer's tool kit (or the equivalent).
- Require that clothing and personal protective equipment (PPE) be appropriate for operating conditions. For example, sturdy boots, long pants, long-sleeved shirt, gloves, and safety glasses would be needed when operating in brush. Chemical PPE would be needed for spraying. Because of the potential for high speeds and rough terrain, ATV manufacturers call for the use of approved helmets.
- Use best practices for securing and distributing loads. Be sure employees know and follow the ATV's weight limits for towing and hauling cargo.
- Advise employees and contractors of your site-specific ATV hazards, like road crossings, steep slopes, drainage ditches, and uneven ground.
- Establish policies stating where ATV use is prohibited, such as on paved or public roads and in high traffic areas.
- Require driving at safe speeds to avoid potential hazards. Emphasize keeping the speed appropriate for the type of terrain: mud, snow, ditches, and gravel, for example.
- Do not allow drivers to carry passengers on a single-rider ATV.

Don't hesitate to caution other operators if you observe unsafe practices.

Encourage them to do the same for you.

Preride inspection

Before starting the ATV

- Check engine oil level and look for any signs of oil or gas leaks.
- Check each tire for condition and proper inflation.
- Check for loose hardware or missing parts.
- Make sure headlights, brake lights, and emergency lights are working properly.

After starting the ATV

- Make sure the throttle, brake, and shifter controls work smoothly and are free from dirt and debris.
- Bounce up and down to test the suspension and make sure it is working properly.
- Set and release the parking brake to make sure it holds properly.
- Go forward slowly. Test the steering. Try the brakes. You should come to a smooth stop, with no grabbing or pulling to one side.

Have ATV operators promptly report any damage or mechanical failures so that repairs can be made. If there are potential safety issues, stop using the ATV and tag it "Out Of Service."

Rider safety tips

While riding keep your

- Feet on the footrests and lean forward, ready to stand up and shift your weight
- Knees in toward the gas tank
- Hands on the handlebars
- Attention in the direction of travel

Be aware of terrain

- Look for steep slopes, drop-offs, holes, or ruts.
- Stay clear of obstacles such as low hanging limbs or cables strung across roadways.

Choose proper speeds

- Look ahead and choose a speed that is proper for the terrain, conditions, and your experience.

ATV design requires you to shift your body weight to assist balance and control.

- Lean forward when riding uphill.
- Lean back when riding downhill.
- When turning, lean forward and to the inside of the turn.
- When traversing a slope, lean uphill.
- Avoid ruts that can catch your downhill tire and cause a rollover.
- Keep the ATV from rolling backward down a hill. However, if this happens, lean forward and use the front brake to stop. Using the rear brake could cause the ATV to roll over backwards.
- If an emergency stop is needed, center your body weight over the ATV and apply both brakes evenly.

Carrying a load

- Stay below the stated load capacity. Properly distribute and securely attach cargo and allow greater distance for braking.
- Consider the cargo you are carrying. For example, liquid cargo in a spray tank will shift the ATV's center of gravity on uneven terrain.

Parking ATVs

- Park the ATV on level ground or across the slope. If parking the ATV facing downhill is unavoidable, put the ATV in reverse and set the parking brake.

Transporting ATVs

- Driving ATVs up and down loading ramps is hazardous. Using trailers is recommended, because trailers are usually closer to the ground than pickup beds, significantly decreasing the loading angle.
- If a pickup bed is the only option, use high traction metal ramps secured to the tailgate with two tie down straps or fasteners to prevent the ramps from falling during loading.
- When possible, reduce the ramp angle by using a berm, ridge, or loading wall.
- Use a winch for loading and unloading an ATV that is damaged or carrying a heavy load.
- Put the transmission in gear and set the parking brake. Be sure tie-down hardware is strong enough for the load.

Road and highway use

- Oregon law (ORS 821.19 as of Sept. 2011) allows ATVs to use public highways only when:
 - Driving between ranching, farming, or agricultural work
 - Holding a valid driver license
 - Not exceeding 20 miles per hour
 - Staying close to the right-hand side of the highway
 - Using a lighted headlight
 - Displaying a "slow-moving vehicle" sign
- Assume drivers do not see you. Drivers tend to look for other cars and are generally not aware of smaller vehicles. Drive defensively and allow extra room for other traffic.
- With their low-pressure tires and rugged suspension, ATVs are not designed for road use. Most manufacturers do not recommend using ATVs on paved roads.
- When highway use is required, consider using vehicles designed for the road.