

Agricultural ATV Use Fact Sheet

Farmers and their families are at risk for ATV-related injuries. These injuries are preventable through knowledge and practice of safe behaviors.

Farm Families and ATVs

ATVs are increasingly common in rural and farming communities. The versatility of these vehicles means that they are useful for many agricultural tasks. However, evidence indicates that they present risks to farming families. For example:

- Over 400,000 ATV-related injuries occur in the U.S. each year.
- Two out of every three injuries require medical care.
- Over one-fifth of all deaths and one-third of all injuries are children under 16 years of age.
- There are more ATVs in Iowa than tractors.
- In a Keokuk County study, 75% of adults working on farms used ATVs.
- A study of nearly 5,000 Eastern Iowa students found that 78% had ridden on an ATV.

ATV Fatalities in Iowa

From 1996 through 2014, 29 occupational fatalities due to ATVs occurred in Iowa. All involved farming activities.

- The most common mechanism of death was a rollover, usually involving uneven or sloped terrain.
- Fatal rollovers were often due to a change in operator positioning or in the movement of materials being hauled.
- Of those dying in a rollover, 90% were pinned against the ground or an immobile object by the ATV and most died of traumatic asphyxiation and crush-related injuries.
- One-third involved spraying and three cases involved a crash with another motor vehicle.
- More than one-third of victims were over 60 years of age.

ATV Injuries in Iowa

A study of farming-related ATV trauma hospitalizations from 2002 through 2009 at the University of Iowa showed:

- The majority involved herding or chasing cattle with an ATV.
- Rollovers occurred due to unexpected terrain changes and distraction caused by the work that was being performed.
- Traveling on roads was a significant risk factor for injury.

10 Ways to Stay Safe When Working on the Farm with ATVs

1. Avoid driving on public roads.

Over 60% of all ATV deaths occur on roadways. ATVs have tire treads that are not designed for roadway surfaces and make rollovers more likely. Iowa law for agricultural road use says:

- Riding is only permitted between sunrise and sunset.
- Operators must have a valid driver's license.
- Operating speeds must be 35 mph or less.

Avoid driving on the road for farm purposes whenever able to do so. To increase visibility to others, use a fluorescent orange safety flag at the rear of the vehicle extending at least 5' from ground and consider driving an orange/yellow ATV rather than one green/camouflaged color.

2. Always wear personal protective equipment, especially an approved helmet.

Head injuries are a major source of ATV deaths and severe disabilities. Helmeted ATV crash victims in Iowa were 80% less likely to suffer a brain injury as compared to un-helmeted victims.

3. Never operate a single-person ATV with a passenger.

Passengers should only be carried if there is an additional seat specifically designed by the ATV manufacturer. ATVs require “active riding” for safe operation and passengers inhibit maneuvering, making rollovers more likely. Passengers are more likely to be ejected to the rear increasing the chance of a head injury. Passengers may also prevent a driver from being able to self-eject, which in some cases can prevent serious injury. Children under 16 years of age represent over 60% of passenger victims.

4. Get hands-on training for all ATV operators through a qualified instructor.

5. Children should never operate adult-size vehicles.

Crashes involving larger ATVs more often result in severe injuries and even death. This includes a rising number of crush-related deaths. Many ATVs are heavy enough that even adults cannot free themselves if riding alone. Youth ATVs have labels indicating recommendations by age.

6. Never exceed the manufacturer’s specified hauling and towing capacity or weight limits. Ensure cargo is balanced, secured, and loaded on provided racks.

The stated load capacity for ATVs can be fairly high, but most of this weight is for the operator. Any load on the ATV will limit the manufacturer’s stated towing capacity. ATV cargo increases the risk of rollover as it alters the center of gravity. For safety purposes:

- Only place cargo on load racks.
- Properly load cargo--rear cargo as far forward as possible, front cargo clear of handlebars.
- Balance cargo, both side-to-side and front-to-back.
- Safely secure cargo and avoid slopes.
- Liquid cargo can be a particular concern, for example when spraying, as the liquid will shift to one side on a slope making a rollover a greater risk.

7. Understand how implements and attachments affect the stability and handling of the ATV.

8. Use caution on unfamiliar terrain and avoid excessive speeds.

Be aware of potential hazards such as trees, ruts, rocks, streams and gullies, and follow posted hazard warnings. Drive at safe speeds for the weather conditions and the terrain.

9. Never operate an ATV while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Half of all recreational ATV-related deaths and one-fifth of recreational ATV-related injuries involve the use of alcohol or drugs.

10. Provide regular maintenance and upkeep of your ATV.

FOR THE LOVED ONES IN YOUR LIFE
RIDE RESPONSIBLY AND STAY SAFE!