

Episode Title: ATV Safety Features

Summary: In this episode, Carolyn Sheridan and Jenna Gibbs from the Agricultural Safety and Health Alliance, talk about their work with ATV safety as part of their Gear Up for Ag Program. Jenna and Carolyn discuss ATV safety and engineering features to help reduce risk of injury. These features include wider frames, crush protection devices, and GPS rollover systems or alarms. “I do think students are really interested in that, because those are safety decisions that you make at the point of purchase. It’s not like a behavior that you have to change after doing it for so many years.”

Expert: Carolyn Sheridan and Jenna Gibbs

Episode Quote:

“And then we asked some other difficult questions, do you know anybody that's been, a fatality—that's been killed, and we get some pretty devastating stories from young people—people that they know. And then we ask additional questions such as, have you changed any of your behaviors. And many times, they say no, they don't believe it will happen to them.”

– Carolyn Sheridan, Agricultural Safety and Health Alliance

Transcript

00:04 K. Crawford

Welcome to the FarmSafe Podcast brought to you by the Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health. In the blink of an eye, an injury can change your life and your farm forever. During each episode, workers in agriculture and public health share first-hand stories and real-life tips for making safer and healthier decisions while on the farm.

Today we hear from Carolyn Sheridan and Jenna Gibbs who work at the Ag Safety and Health Alliance. As we wrap up our series on ATV safety, Carolyn and Jenna share stories from their Gear Up for Ag Program. To start, I asked Carolyn and Jenna to introduce themselves, describe what the Ag Safety and Health Alliance is, and tell us about their Gear Up for Ag program. They also explain why ATV Safety is an important topic to them.

00:50 C. Sheridan

I’m Carolyn Sheridan. I am the Executive Director and Founder of Ag Health and Safety Alliance, and I am also a registered nurse. For 25 plus years I have been teaching agricultural health and safety but also working with the rural agricultural community in many capacities.

I grew up on a dairy farm in northwest Iowa. I live about 10 miles from where I grew up. So, farming has always been in my life, and agricultural health and safety has been a huge passion of mine. I think maybe even before I knew it was a passion of mine, and I was the concerned child. I was like “Oh dad don’t do that!” or “Mom, what dad's doing?” And so, I'm very fortunate to also have good colleagues and people that work for us at Ag Health and Safety Alliance including Jenna Gibbs who does a lot of great work for us.

J. Gibbs

My name is Jenna Gibbs and I'm the Director of Operations for the Ag Health and Safety Alliance, and my background is in Industrial Hygiene. Ag Health and Safety Alliance is an international 501c3 nonprofit organization. Our mission is to train young adults in agriculture on a range of health and safety topics. We promote evidence-based information, use regional resources, and find passionate local people to assist with delivery.

02:11 C. Sheridan

Our program’s called Gear Up for Ag Health and Safety—the shortened version is Gear up for Ag, and we're very proud of the fact that it’s an interactive, demonstration-based, with a little bit of a lecture, agricultural health and safety program that covers a

number of topics, based on the region and also a lot of the space on our survey results that we get back. What we found is this type of education that's interactive and talking about stories, is very impactful for all generations of agriculture.

We're really, really interested in ATV safety because our main program focuses on the young generation of agriculture so we're fortunate enough to get to talk to a lot of college students, and high school students— so as you can imagine we get lots of stories, and some astounding and frightening and sad stories. And so, we've really decided to spend a good deal of our energy and time on ATV safety.

J. Gibbs

My role in ATV safety for our organization is looking at some of our survey data from the students in our program. So, we do ask several questions about ATV safety behaviors, and we learn a lot from the students in our programs which many of them are 18 to 25 years old, so they are that younger group.

And then from the personal aspect, my family has a farm outside of Iowa City, we have ATVs so it's something that I'm constantly around. When I hear all the stories from students, I'm not surprised about some of the stories, but I am really, really committed to kind of changing the safety culture around these devices.

04:00 K. Crawford

Carolyn and Jenna survey all their students before the start of the program and ask questions about health and safety behaviors on a range of topics, including ATV safety. This helps them understand what hazards students have encountered, and what they currently do to stay safe. For ATVs, Jenna and Carolyn are able to identify some of the risk factors and behaviors that we have been discussing in the earlier episodes of this series with Dr. Jennissen.

04:29 J. Gibbs

We asked students how frequently they're using ATVs, and I think when a lot of people think about ATV use, they think of recreational use—like driving them around on sand dunes and looking cool—but we asked the students do you use this for agriculture? So, are you doing tasks? Are you checking on cattle? Are you spraying? Are you hauling tools around the farm? And about 70% of our students do say yes, we use them for agriculture and that's cash crop and livestock students both using them.

And then we asked them also were you using ATVs before age 14? And again, it's like 72%, in fact I think it's even more, say they were using ATVs regularly on the farm before the age of 14 so by the time Carolyn and I see them, they've already been on ATVs for several years, and their habits are ingrained. I know it sounds like young adults are easy to shape their habits, but what they're doing they've already been doing for a while. And we tend to ask them about how often they wear helmets, and how often they allow extra riders, we know that not wearing a helmet is the risky behavior, and so is the more riders are on your ATV the higher risk you are. And we found that only 18% of our students say they actually wear helmets and close to 80% regularly allow extra riders in fact some say they always allow extra riders. They're not even on an ATV unless there's multiple riders on a single device.

This was interesting to us, because we also ask them how many of them have rolled their ATV which is a really scary scenario, I've never rolled, my husband has rolled, and we know that ATVs weigh more than 300 pounds so it's quite scary if they roll over. And I'm sure we've learned from previous studies that that's kind of the highest risk, but half of the students have said they have rolled. So now we've got a really scary scenario that half of them report happen and then these low safety behaviors.

06:42 C. Sheridan

We do an interesting exercise in many of our programs where we ask students to stand. So, stand if you rolled your ATV and it's astounding, I know Jenna— one of the first programs that you were part of, and it was like half of the room stood up and it's really astounding. The difficult thing for us sometimes to hear is when you say okay if you haven't been injured go ahead and sit down. And so, then those remaining standing will have an injury story. And then we asked some other difficult questions, do you know anybody that's been, a fatality—that's been killed, and we get some pretty devastating stories from young people—people that they know. And then we ask additional questions such as, have you changed any of your behaviors. And many times, they say no, they don't believe it will happen to them. And so, I think these, these are the kinds of interactions we've had with students at colleges all over and in high schools as well that really motivate us to find engaging ways to talk to students, and not only listen to their stories but you can't stop

there. Let's listen to those stories. And then what are we going to do with not only the stories, but the data that we've collected in our surveys.

08:00 K. Crawford

The following are three stories that Gear Up for Ag students shared with Carolyn and Jenna.

Speaker 1

I rolled my ATV down a steep ravine; I was looking back to check on a friend after we worked on some fencing. It only takes one second when you are not necessarily looking forward.

Speaker 2

I was riding on the back rack and my dad was driving... was on a steep hill sideways on a trail and it didn't fully roll but flipped on us. I was like five and my dad managed to keep the quad off of me (thank God). We were both alright!

Speaker 3

My friend took our ATV on a ditch at too much of an angle and rolled it. She was lucky that we had a special seat on the back of it, which stopped it from rolling on her.

08:46 C. Sheridan

I think the ones that make the most impact within the classroom are the ones that we hear where the students thought it was unexpected. We do hear a lot of those yes well, I was being crazy, I was going around fast, I was going up and down hills. But the stories that we hear when people say well, I was just driving to check the cattle, and it felt really like a flat surface I didn't expect it and then all of a sudden, I was rolling.

And then I think also the ones that where they have somewhat of an injury— so a student, most recently had a fractured collarbone. He said that “I rolled it, and I was totally surprised, and I was not pinned.” He said, “I was afraid I was going to be pinned, but I did, in the roll, fracture my collarbone.” And he said, “Oh, it was no big deal”. And then I started to ask him questions about “What were you unable to do? How long did it take before you were able to do sports?” Things like that. So, taking it into the context of yes, you made it, you're healthy now, but you do have a period of time where you're not, and we talked about the period of time when he was really scared.

J. Gibbs

I noticed a lot of them are multitasking. I was looking at the cattle, I was turned around looking at a friend and I think when I'm looking at those I think that's what makes using ATVs for work, different than recreational use when you're using them for recreation, you're all into the ATV— you're looking at where you're going, maybe you're doing it for sport or on a trail. But when you're doing it for agriculture, it seems like people are trying to look and haul things and they're working with someone else. And so, it's like your brain is kind of in multiple places.

10:35 K. Crawford

We went on to talk about how we can't just rely on telling stories and telling people to change their behavior. Jenna and Carolyn shared that in addition to talking about safe behaviors, they also educate their students on ATV safety features that can provide additional protection. They explain that these safety features are considered engineering controls which are features on the ATV designed to reduce the hazard or the rider's exposure. For example, a crush protection device on an ATV helps prevent the ATV from crushing the operator in the event of a rollover.

J. Gibbs

We like to ask people their biggest takeaways from the program, and in the last year I would say about a third, 30% of people say something from the whole entire safety program was ATV-related.

And a lot of times it's because they're unaware of some of the engineering features that can be used on an ATV. So, we talk a lot about helmet use, but not just helmet—the helmet should be approved by the Department of Transportation. And then we get into using things like crush protection devices, GPS rollover systems or alarms, we talk about buying ATVs with wider frames, and even some are coming—some different models—like you'll see more sport models that are fit with roll cages now, so we talk a little bit about that. And then we also like to highlight, just looking for ATVs with higher stability ratings and talking to the dealer about stability. And then lastly, we like to also highlight, if you're going to have an ATV—checking to make sure that if you use accessories, like let's say you're going to put a trailer on the back of that ATV, it is probably going to be safest if the trailer was made by the original equipment manufacturer. A lot of people do like to make their own attachments, save money.

So, we talked a little bit about those, and I do think students are really interested in that, because those are safety decisions that you make at the point of purchase. It's not like a behavior that you have to change after doing it for so many years. We've learned that actually a lot of students don't know very much about the safety features for example, only about a quarter of them have ever heard of the ATV crush protection device and only about a quarter of them know that wider frame ATVs are more stable and hardly any students know about stability ratings and asking about stability ratings. I would say about 18% know about stability rating so we're trying to generate some awareness about some of those features.

13:22 K. Crawford

I asked Carolyn and Jenna to wrap up with what they hoped would be the main takeaways for people learning about ATV safety.

C. Sheridan

Those things would be, you know, use of helmets and actually getting the right helmet too, because we know that we have a wide range of ages and also genders, riding on the ATVs, and the no extra rider piece of it. That's a tough one. But that's a very important message that we want to get out to everyone that if you're riding an ATV those two things are very important.

13:53 J. Gibbs

What I want to see is the shift in consumer demand for safer ATV products, and I think by getting at this young generation we can help create some of that. Have you ever seen a car commercial with a five-star safety rating and everyone loves it, right? And so, I want—my dream—is to educate young people so that when they are going in and making their purchases further from now on that's their first question when they walk into the dealer. Do you have dual wheels for the ATV, so it won't roll? How wide is this frame? Are there any models with roll cages, where I know I will be safe? I would love to create that consumer demand for these products, and I think it all starts with education so I'm really, really lucky that Carolyn and I have the ability to shift the culture like that.

14:43 C. Sheridan

And I think the crush protection devices that we talk about, well, you know ROPS for tractors that they're adaptable and that's the case for crush protection devices as well. And so, there's good information about that—so any ATV out there that could be adapted for that as well. So, I think that the safety culture is important for our organization to promote that. And then to think about ways that we can impact all generations, through our education through behaviors, but also through engineering controls.

We're encouraged with some of our post test results and in finding that that perhaps if we have a couple of things—more awareness engineering controls, making different buying decisions, and then in addition to that, learning more about the safety behaviors—no extra riders, helmet use—perhaps we can be instrumental in reducing some of these really disheartening statistics that we see.

If you want to know more about our organization, you can reach out to us at our website AgHealthandSafety.com or you can email us at info@aghealthandsafety.com.

15:54 K. Crawford

We have provided links to additional resources in the episode resources section of our website. Check out the motion graphic from the Ag Health and Safety Alliance that summarizes risks for ATVs and highlights the safety features they talked about today. Carolyn and Jenna have also provided a link to a poster they created to summarize some of the survey data they shared with us. And if you want to learn more about the Gear Up for Ag program, we have included a link for that as well.

16:21 C. Sheridan

Join us on the farm safe podcast to learn more about keeping you and your family safe on the farm.

K. Crawford

We want to hear from you. Share your stories about health and safety issues on the farm, about injuries that made you change the way you work, or about the ways you keep yourself and others safe on your farm. Also let us know if there are any topics that you want to hear about on the air. You can visit our website at gpcah.org or email us.

Original music for the FarmSafe podcast was written and performed by Ben Schmidt.

This work was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health's Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health.

Episode Resources

- [Gear Up for Safety](#)
- [ATV Safety – Engineering Controls Motion Graphic](#)
- [Poster with Survey Data](#)

Photo

