

SAFETY ALERT

ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATVs)

November 2007

There have been a number of recent incidents where people have been killed or seriously injured while operating ATVs.

ATVs, also referred to as quad bikes, are used extensively on farms for a range of tasks. The size and handling of an ATV make it ideal for traversing a variety of terrain. However, the relatively high combined centre of gravity of rider and machine presents an increased risk of overturning when operating on slopes, banks, dam edges and other uneven terrain. Overloading of ATVs and incorrect riding technique also increases the risk of overturning.

ATVs rely on the rider to have sufficient strength, weight and agility to operate safely. They may not be suitable for use by aged persons and those with physical disabilities. ATVs used for work purposes should not be operated by persons under 16 years of age.

Research by Farmsafe Australia Inc indicates that the majority of deaths involving ATVs are due to crush injury from rollover or from injuries sustained from striking a hard surface after being thrown from an ATV in a crash.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Employers have an obligation under occupational health and safety legislation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees and others at the workplace (including visitors).

Clause 136 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* requires employers to ensure the safety of their employees when using plant, including ATVs. In particular, plant is not used unless the operator has received adequate information, training and supervision, and that it is used only for the purpose for which it is designed.

CONTROL MEASURES FOR THE SAFE OPERATION OF ATVs

The following are some of the control measures that should be considered to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with using ATVs:

- Before purchasing an ATV, consider whether it is the right piece of equipment to do the job safely and most efficiently on your farm. Consider different types of vehicles, particularly if regularly carrying heavy or bulky loads, or operating on steep, difficult or rough terrain. Utility vehicles are available from numerous manufacturers and offer seating for two or more people, roll-over protection bars, larger load trays, lower centre of gravity, seat belts and other safety and operational features.
- Ensure that all operators are trained in the safe use of the ATVs (including the use of any attachments) and assess their ability to use the vehicle safely. Numerous organisations provide training in the safe operation of ATVs. Contact your local ATV dealer.
- Supervise new operators until they are competent. ATVs require a different riding technique to two-wheeled motorbikes. Do not assume that experience on motorbikes will make a rider competent on an ATV.
- Make sure all riders have read the operator's manual and comply with the advice. If you do not have the manual or other instructional materials, contact the manufacturer or local dealer to obtain them.
- Wear an approved motorcycle helmet and protective clothing – boots, eye protection, long sleeved shirt and full length pants.

WorkCover. **Watching out for you.**

- Establish any dangerous areas on the farm where an ATV should not be operated as 'no go' zones. Communicate these zones to all operators.
- Keep ATVs maintained to manufacturer specifications. For example, functional brakes and correct tyre pressure are critical for safe operation – do not over inflate tyres. Ensure all safety labels are in a legible condition.
- Always ride at a speed in accordance with the terrain and conditions.
- Do not exceed the inclines recommended by the manufacturer when operating on hills.
- Reduce speed when carrying loads that can alter the centre of gravity and/or stopping capability of the ATV. Know that liquid loads shift when riding inclines or around corners, which increases the risk of a roll-over.
- When cornering, shift your body weight to the 'inside' of the corner. This reduces the risk of the ATV rolling. This technique may best be learnt through training from a professional training provider or by viewing the safety video provided by the manufacturer.
- Before purchasing attachments, ensure they are identified by the manufacturer as suitable for use with your particular machine size and type.
- Do not exceed load or towing limits (consult the manufacturer's operator manual).
- Have an effective emergency communication system in place when working in isolated areas. This may include the use of two-way radio, mobile phone and/or Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) (often referred to as an EPIRB). It is important that these be of a type that can be kept on the operator so that they can be accessed if an operator is pinned beneath the ATV eg shoulder holster or belt attachment. You should also arrange a system where those working in isolation 'check in' at regular intervals.
- Do not carry passengers unless the ATV is specifically designed for this. Never carry children as passengers.
- Do not let anyone under the age of 16 operate an ATV used for work purposes.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- ATV Safety Checklist. WorkCover NSW, publication No. 1370.
- ATV Agskills. NSW Department of Primary Industries, Cat No. B120.
- Safe Operation of All-terrain Vehicles and All-terrain Utilities on Australian Farms. Farmsafe Australia. Download from <http://www.farmsafe.org.au>

For further information about this matter please contact WorkCover's Assistance Service on 13 10 50.

Disclaimer: This alert is intended to provide advice only and is not to be construed as waiving or modifying any legal obligation.

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