

Safe Use of All Terrain Vehicles

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are used in agricultural operations for a variety of work activities including access to remote areas, inspection of crops or livestock, tending to irrigation and/or fence lines and transporting items between locations.

According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission, in 2008 ATVs were responsible for 135,100 injuries that required emergency medical treatment and there were an estimated 410 ATV related deaths. Given the safety record of these vehicles, having new operators attend an approved training session is highly recommended. For information concerning training in your area, contact your local ATV dealer or the ATV Safety Institute at (800) 447-4700.

Companies can take steps to reduce ATV injuries by developing and implementing operator training, establishing standard operating procedures and enforcing safety rules with documented disciplinary action.

OPERATOR SAFETY

The following principles should be observed by all ATV operators:

- It is recommended that anyone under the age of 18 should not be allowed to operate or ride on ATVs.
- It is essential that operators receive training before they are allowed to drive an ATV. For information concerning training in your area, contact your local ATV dealer or the ATV Safety Institute at (800) 447-4700.
- Protective clothing, sturdy footwear, and proper riding equipment are recommended when operating ATVs. Over-the-ankle work boots, long pants and long sleeved shirt are highly recommended.
- An approved helmet and eye protection should always be worn.
- Most ATVs are designed for the operator only and additional riders should not be permitted. The unique handling characteristics of the ATV require that the operator utilize body weight to aid in the control of the machine and an additional rider can disturb this process and possibly lead to a loss of control.
- ATVs are built for off-road use only and should not be operated on public roadways.
- Always refer to the owner's manual for the recommended turning technique for your ATV.

EQUIPMENT SAFETY

Safety of the equipment itself is also important. The following should be addressed before allowing use of an ATV:

- A pre-ride check should be conducted to ensure the ATV is in good working order. The pre-ride check should include a review of the following:
 - Tires and wheels
 - Controls and cables
 - Lights and electrical system
 - Oil and fuel
 - Chain and/or driveshaft
- A trailer can impact the ATVs maneuverability. Before towing a trailer, review the operator's manual to ensure that the ATV can be used for towing.
- Adequate guarding is necessary over exhaust and hot engine components, drive shafts and chains or sprockets. A spark arrestor is also necessary.

- The manufacturer's representative should be consulted regarding any modifications to an ATV. Modifications that change the vehicle's intended center of gravity create additional stability problems.
- Agricultural ATVs should not be operated at excessive speeds, and never higher than 25 miles per hour.
- Since ATVs are relatively small and low to the ground, they can be difficult to see. Lights, reflectors and flags should be used to improve visibility.
- Four wheel ATVs are more stable and better suited for farm work than three wheel ATVs.

ATVs have proven to be very useful on many farms and ranches. It is essential to provide employees with training on the proper use and standard operating procedures for ATVs to help control hazards and reduce injuries.

For additional information, contact your Zenith Safety and Health Consultant.

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