

ATV's: Deceptively Dangerous

McKenzie Pediatrics

The following information was taken from a series of investigative reporting articles that ran in the Portland Oregonian during May of 2007.

Did You Know?

- ATV's kill about 800 people a year in the United States, and injure over 135,000?
- A quarter of the dead and a third of the injured are children?
- Between 1982 and 2004, over 2000 children were killed in ATV crashes?
- More Oregonians are injured on ATVs than on motorcycles, skateboards, watercraft, snowmobiles combined?
- ATV riding involves almost twice the risk of injury serious enough to require hospitalization than any other activity, including football and snowboarding.
- ATV-related non-fatal injuries tend to be severe, and include broken ribs and other bones, ruptured eyeballs, abdominal organ trauma, and catastrophic brain and spinal trauma. ATV injuries also tend to be extremely dirty, in some cases requiring multiple surgeries to clean and repair the damage.
- In Oregon, at least 82 people have died on ATVs since 2000, including 22 children?
- Lane County has the highest death and injury totals of any Oregon county?
- American taxpayers pick up about \$3 billion a year in medical expenses for ATV injuries?
- In Oregon, taxpayers picked up nearly a quarter of the \$50 million in hospital costs for the 1800 Oregon ATV trauma cases from 2000 through 2005?
- Adult-sized ATVs now weigh up to 850 lbs., and some can travel at speeds up to 85 mph!
- The vast majority of children who die in ATV accidents are on adult machines
- Children cannot drive cars, yet an unlicensed child is permitted to drive an ATV at high speeds, without a helmet, on unpaved or paved surfaces in virtually any area.

What Makes ATVs Hazardous?

- Despite their name and rugged looks, all-terrain vehicles really aren't made for all terrains. They come with more than two dozen hazard warnings that advise riders to stay away from steep slopes. Rough terrain, paved roads, and slippery or loose soil.
- Manufacturers says that ATVs are "rider-active", meaning that it's up to riders to keep them upright using balance and skill
- ATVs have high ground clearance and a narrow track width to navigate trails and ground obstacles. Those features also make them less stable than cars and present a high risk of overturning.
- Children lack the strength, coordination, and judgment to operate ATVs safely. The primary cause of children's deaths on an ATV were overturning, and collision with a stationary object, both of which implies the inability to control the vehicle properly.

What Do Pediatricians Recommend?

- Every state should pass laws that prohibit children under the age of 16 from operating or otherwise riding adult-sized ATVs. A driver's license should be required to do so.
- Youth models, limited to either 15 or 30 mph, are the only ATVs a child under 16 should ride.
- Riders should wear a helmet, goggles, long sleeves, pants and heavy shoes for protection
- Riding an ATV takes special skills. All the major ATV manufacturers offer free training to new buyers. Please take advantage of this training. It might save your life.
- Stay off paved roads, steep slopes, and rocky terrain.
- Never ride or operate an ATV before sunrise or after sunset.
- Never ride an ATV with a passenger of any age.
- Never drink alcohol before riding an ATV
- Never ride a three-wheeled ATV