



Today's discussion is from the Motorized Operations Category.

ATV Safety

The use of ATVs for wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire operations has increased dramatically over the last ten years. Note: Several agencies have required training for ATV operations (check your agency's requirements).

- Most injuries associated with ATVs occur when:
 - the driver loses control (When the operator encounters a change of terrain or swerves to avoid an obstacle, it causes an abrupt change of balance and loss of control.)
 - the vehicle rolls over
 - the driver or passenger is thrown off
 - the operator's loss of attention to what, where, and how an ATV is being operated
 - or there is a collision with a fixed object
- Identified contributing factors to ATV accidents include:
 - rider inexperience
 - excessive speed--excessive speed, combined with rough terrain, can create enough pitch and bounce to cause the operator to lose control of the vehicle
 - lack of helmet use
 - the ATV is improperly loaded or load weight exceeds vehicle operation capacity
 - the operator carries a passenger that affects the operators control and operation of the ATV
- Safety measures for ATV use include:
 - Conduct pre-ride inspection-- This inspection should include checking tires, throttle cable, front and rear brakes, lights and switches, oil and fuel, chain or drive shaft, air filter, clean out of weeds and other debris from around engine and other hot components, and the chassis for any defects or wear.
 - Single riders only--Injuries frequently occur to passengers, therefore riding double should not be permitted.
 - Always wear PPE- helmets, eye protection, and protective clothing. Appropriate helmets are those designed for motorcycle (not firefighting) use, and should include safety visors/face shields, goggles, or safety glasses for eye protection.
 - Use headlights to improve visibility by other vehicles
 - Maintain speeds acceptable for riding conditions, especially over uneven terrain
 - Traversing slopes should be avoided
 - Mounted or towed loads should not exceed manufacturer's recommendation and should be properly mounted so that weight transfer does not affect the center of gravity of the machine--mounting a tank (e.g., drip torch) on the rear of the vehicle increases the chances for a rear turnover.
 - Do not drive on public roads - Collisions with automobiles on public roads are the most common cause of fatal ATV accidents. It may be illegal to operate an ATV on public roads—check your state's laws.

References: [Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations](#)
[Safety and Occupational Health Manual Handbook, BLM-1112-1](#)

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

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