



SAFE KIDS USA POSITION STATEMENT KIDS AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) sales have grown dramatically in recent years, with a 280% increase in annual sales from 1994 to 2005, according to the ATV industry association, the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA). SVIA reports that 75% of ATV owners ride as a family recreational activity.

There are five categories of ATVs: adult models, intended for persons age 16 and older; transition models, intended for persons age 14 and older; and three types of youth models: Y-12+ models, intended for children ages 12 and older; Y-10+ models, intended for children ages 10 and older; and Y-6+ models intended for children ages 6 and older. Distinctions used to be made based on engine size, but now they are based on maximum speed. Maximum speeds for youth models range from 15-30 mph and for transition ATVs, they are 38 mph. The weight of the vehicle is not considered.

According to the CPSC, there were 542 reported ATV-related fatalities and an estimated 150,900 ATV-related injuries treated in emergency rooms in 2007. Children younger than 16 accounted for 20% of reported deaths and 27% of estimated injuries. Children younger than 12 accounted for 9% of reported deaths.

The risks associated with riding ATVs are:

- Head injuries (cause of most ATV-related deaths)
- Head and spinal trauma
- Abdominal injuries
- Abrasions, lacerations, and clavicle and extremity fractures
- Burn injuries from contact with the engine and exhaust system

Safe Kids USA's policy is that until they are fully licensed under state law to operate a motor vehicle, children should not operate or ride as passengers on ATVs of any size, including youth ATVs. ATVs are inherently difficult to operate, and children under 16 do not have the cognitive and physical capabilities to operate these vehicles safely. While ATVs in some cases support a family's livelihood, the death and injury risks their use poses to children is too great.



Parents and caregivers should note that the majority of ATVs are designed to carry only an operator, with no passengers. A passenger can increase the instability of an ATV and make it difficult for the operator to properly steer and control the vehicle.

Helmets do not provide sufficient protection in ATV crashes. In one study of ATV deaths and injuries to children under the age of 16, 19% of children who died from head injuries were wearing helmets.

A child 16 or older who is licensed to operate motor vehicles and would like to operate an ATV should:

- Take a hands-on safety training course.
- Always wear protective gear – especially a helmet – when riding ATVs.
- Not operate an ATV with a passenger or ride as a passenger.
- Not operate an ATV on paved roads.
- No operate an ATV under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Among the concurring organizations are:

The American Academy of Pediatrics

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