

Agriculture Safety: All-Terrain Vehicle Hazards during Farm Work

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are used in agricultural operations to help farmworkers gather livestock, pull trailers and haul small loads, or carry pesticide applicators. ATVs have caused many farm fatalities and injuries. This fact sheet provides practical safety measures that employers and supervisors can take to protect vehicle operators from harmful incidents. Employers are responsible for providing a safe workplace for farmworkers.

ATVs Can Be Dangerous

ATV injuries and fatalities on farms and ranches are widespread and increasing. NIOSH identified 2,090 ATV injuries and 321 ATV fatalities between 2003 and 2011, with three out of five of the occupational deaths occurring in agriculture.

The majority of these ATV incidents result from:

- Loss of control of the vehicle
- ATV rollovers
- Operators being thrown from the vehicle
- ATVs colliding with a tree or other obstacles
- Operators not wearing a helmet or other protective equipment
- Inexperienced operators

Employers need to provide ATVs that have the following features: Motorcycle-type handle bars for steering control; large, low-pressure tires; single worker design; and a seat that can be straddled by the worker.

ATV Safety Checks

Employers should train operators to perform pre- and post-ride safety checks to ensure that the ATV is operating properly. Pre- and post-ride checks should include inspecting:

- Tires and wheels
- Controls and cables
- Lights and electrical systems
- Oil and fuel
- Chain and/or driveshaft

Training

Employers should train operators on how to operate an ATV safely. The best way to learn to operate an ATV safely is through training and practice.



Employers should:

- Provide training on the ATV owner's manual to each operator.
- Never allow untrained workers to drive an ATV.
- Never allow workers to operate an ATV when tired or impaired.
- Ensure that guards are in place to prevent accidental contact with hot or moving ATV parts.

Employers should train operators to:

- Place the gear in neutral or park, with the parking brake locked before starting the vehicle.
- Never operate an ATV at excessive speeds.
- Maintain a speed that is proper for the terrain, visibility conditions, and the operator's experience level.
- Stay alert near marked and unmarked terrain hazards, such as holes, stumps, ruts, culverts, wires, fences, and large rocks.
- Operate ATVs in accord with the owner's manual and not attempt wheelies, jumps or hazardous stunts.
- Be aware when approaching hills, turns, and other obstacles.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Employers should provide operators with PPE awareness training prior to allowing an operator to handle an ATV. Even though the moving parts of an ATV are covered, entanglement with moving parts or accidental contact with objects can cause severe injuries.

Employers should:

- Provide head and face protection and protective clothing.
- Ensure that ATV operators always wear proper protective gear or equipment. PPE can reduce the severity of ATV-related incidents.

Employers should train operators to:

- Secure loose bootlaces that can become entangled in a spinning ATV axle.
- Never wear loose clothing that could get caught in passing brush, pulling the operator off the seat.
- Wear helmets/head protection; bicycle helmets do not provide sufficient face and head protection and absorb little energy.
- Wear protective clothing, including gloves, non-skid shoes, goggles, or face shields, long pants and long sleeves.

Load and Weight Considerations

Employers should provide operators with information about the ATV's load and weight limitations. The total weight of the ATV should not exceed the manufacturer's limits—this includes the weights of the ATV, the load and the operator. Multiple riders on a single-rider ATV and the improper installation of equipment can affect an ATV's maneuverability.

Employers should train operators to:

- Check tires to ensure that they are fully inflated.
- Never allow multiple riders (unless the ATV is specifically designed for more than one rider).
- Provide attachments and equipment that are appropriate and approved by the manufacturer.
- Keep the ATV well-balanced so that it does not pull to one side.
- Secure tools firmly to the ATV's cargo rack.
- Understand the ATV's trailer loading and pulling procedures.

Crossing Roads and Highways

Serious injuries or fatalities can occur when ATV operators are riding on or crossing roads. Employers who require operators to cross roads and highways should provide training on how to do so safely. Employers should check their state or local laws before allowing ATVs to operate on roads or highways.

Employers should train operators to:

- Stop on the shoulder before crossing. The leader should dismount and watch for traffic as he waves the group across the road.
- Yield the right of way to oncoming traffic and to always look both ways.
- Cross the roads at a 90 degree angle where there are fewer obstructions and the visibility is good.
- Ride cautiously on roadways; ATVs handle differently on pavement.

Working Alone

Farms are worksites that can be spread out over several acres, where workers could be working alone for long periods of time. Working alone includes all tasks where operators do not have direct contact with the employer or coworkers. This could include herding or tending to animals, maintaining fences or buildings, or tasks in fields. Employers should have check-in procedures in place for these operators.

Employers should know the operator's:

- Destination.
- Estimated time of departure and return.
- Contact information.
- Mode of communication (cell phone, hand-held radio, etc.).
- Alternate plans in the event of bad weather, traffic problems, etc.

Workers' Rights

Workers have the right to:

- Working conditions that do not pose a risk of serious harm.
- Receive information and training (in a language and vocabulary the worker understands) about workplace hazards, methods to prevent them, and the OSHA standards that apply to their workplace.

- Review records of work-related injuries and illnesses.
- File a complaint asking OSHA to inspect their workplace if they believe there is a serious hazard or that their employer is not following OSHA's rules. OSHA will keep all identities confidential.
- Exercise their rights under the law without retaliation, including reporting an injury or raising health and safety concerns with their employer or OSHA. If a worker has been retaliated against for using their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days.

Additional Information

For more information on ATV safety and other issues affecting farmworkers, visit OSHA's [Safety and Health Topics Agricultural Operations website](#).

How to Contact OSHA

For questions or to get information or advice, to report an emergency, fatality, hospitalization, amputation, or loss of an eye, or to file a confidential complaint, contact your nearest OSHA office, visit www.osha.gov or call OSHA at 1-800-321-OSHA (6742), TTY 1-877-889-5627.

This is one in a series of informational fact sheets highlighting OSHA programs, policies or standards. It does not impose any new compliance requirements. For a comprehensive list of compliance requirements of OSHA standards or regulations, refer to Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulations. This information will be made available to sensory-impaired individuals upon request. The voice phone is (202) 693-1999; teletypewriter (TTY) number: (877) 889-5627.

For assistance, contact us. We can help. It's confidential.



www.osha.gov (800) 321-OSHA (6742)



U.S. Department of Labor