

# ATVs take on multiple duties but careless moment can kill

Agricultural production workers age 18-plus accounted for the highest rate of ATV-related deaths compared to any other industry sector

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All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) have become a workhorse on most agricultural operations.

Their versatility allows them to be used for livestock handling, pesticide applications, hauling loads, transportation, mending fences and much more. They are perfect for unpaved terrain because of their short wheelbase and high center of gravity.

Those same characteristics also make them a risk on agricultural operations. The short wheelbase and high center of gravity makes them prone to lose control due to high speeds, pitch, and roll.

Very simple riding practices, such as ATV maintenance, wearing appropriate clothing, developing proper riding skills, and operating ATVs safely, minimize these risks.

ATVs, like other vehicles, require proper tire and wheel maintenance, ensuring controls are in working order, lights and electrical are functioning, and oil and fluids are good. This will provide a dependable and safer ATV to operate. Read the owner's manual for maintenance recommendations.

Proper clothing adds to protection. Most users already wear these: long pants, long sleeves, boots that provide ankle support and protection, gloves, and eye protection (sunglasses or goggles).

A helmet is one item not regularly worn. Wyoming does not have a helmet law, even for highways; however, a helmet is the best protection against brain trauma and possible death.

What about riding skills? Operation of an ATV is "rider-active." This means a rider is active in the movement and operation of a vehicle. For example, the rider is constantly shifting weight by leaning



Haul loads appropriate for an ATV's size.

into turns, standing and leaning forward when climbing hills, balancing themselves as the ATV traverses obstacles, etc. Proper riding form and skill minimizes accidents.

Unfortunately, hopping on and figuring it out is the most common way for gaining skill. This does not always result in proper riding form or technique. There are courses offered by the ATV Safety Institute, <https://atvsafety.org>, that teach proper handling and operation. These courses are more specific to recreational use, although the skills directly transfer for use in agricultural tasks.

The last riding practice is simple: operate the ATV safely. These are common sense, such as riding appropriate-sized machines, driving appropriate speeds, do not show off, ride within the limits of the machine, do not exceed the load limit of a machine, and only haul or pull loads appropriate in size for the ATV. Information for ATV machine size, age limits, and load limits are on the warning labels on the machine, owner's manual, or by calling the manufacturer. Riding within the ATV's limits, for example not sidehilling on too steep of slope, provides the safest operational environment.

For more information and resources on ATV safety for agricultural use, contact any member of the UW Extension's Wyoming Good Riding Practice (WyGRiP) team: Jeff Edwards at 307-837-2000 or [jedward4@uwyo.edu](mailto:jedward4@uwyo.edu); Hudson Hill, 307-885-3132 or [hrrhill@uwyo.edu](mailto:hrrhill@uwyo.edu); Brian Sebade, 307-721-2571 or [bsebade@uwyo.edu](mailto:bsebade@uwyo.edu), and me, at 307-754-8836 or [jvardema@uwyo.edu](mailto:jvardema@uwyo.edu).

## ATV FACTS

- The steady increase in ATV use increased preventable ATV injuries and deaths
- An estimated 400,000 injuries and 800 deaths occur each year in the U.S.
- Agricultural production workers age 18+ accounted for the highest rate of ATV-related deaths compared to any other industry sector

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