

NAON Position Statement

All-Terrain Vehicle Safety

Issue

With more than 800 deaths and 150,000 injuries occurring each year, all-terrain vehicle (ATV) safety is a critically important issue for communities and riders across the country. About one-third of ATV-related deaths and injuries are to children under 16 years old. Like other activities involving high speeds and heavy machinery, riding an ATV can be dangerous and certain behaviors will increase the risk of injury or death.

Position

The National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses (NAON) supports public education of the risks and dangers involved in riding ATVs. NAON encourages formal training to teach drivers how to control ATVs in typical situations and what protective personal equipment should be worn. Anyone younger than 16 years of age should never be on an adult ATV. A parent or other responsible adult must closely supervise children under the age of 16 riding an age-appropriate ATV.

NAON supports the development and implementation of national safety standards for ATVs. NAON urges lawmakers to pass state and local ATV safety laws regulating rider behavior, such as helmet laws and age and use restrictions. Once such laws are passed, they must be enforced.

NAON's goal is to motivate action toward ATV safety.

Background

ATVs, introduced in the early 1970's, are not toys. They are powerful and potentially dangerous vehicles that can travel in excess of 60 miles per hour and can weigh over 700 pounds. ATVs can easily roll and tip over. They should not be used on paved roads. Promotion of proven prevention strategies, including helmet use, is indicated.

Anyone younger than 16 years of age should never be on an adult ATV.

Injury rates in children and adolescents are alarming. The Consumer Products Safety Commission's (CPSC) 2002 annual report revealed 5239 deaths attributed to ATVs between 1982 and 2002. One third (n = 1706) involved children younger than 16 years. The CPSC entered into a 10-year decree with ATV manufacturers in 1988 in an attempt to decrease ATV injuries and deaths. The voluntary industry safety regulations expired in 1998.

ATV-related deaths and associated costs are high and increasing. From 2000 through 2005, 5,204 people died from ATV crashes. A mean of 694 adults and 174 children died annually from ATV injuries. Total costs increased 15% for ATV deaths in children, 45% in adults. (Helmcamp, 2009).

About one-third of ATV-related deaths and injuries involve children. Head and extremity injuries are the two most common injuries in children with ATV injuries and are associated with long-term disability. ATV use by children is dangerous and is a significant threat to child safety (Shah, 2009).

The ATV Safety Institute recommends the use of motorcycle or other motorized sports helmets that are certified by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and/or the Snell Memorial Foundation (Snell). Other important protective equipment to wear while riding an ATV includes: over-the-ankle boots, to protect feet and ankles from injury; goggles, to protect eyes from rocks and dust thrown up by ATVs; gloves, to protect fingers and hands; and long pants and long-sleeved shirt, to protect skin from rocks, trees, and other debris.

Other recommendations for safety include: riding only on designated trails at a safe speed, never riding ATVs

on public roads, and never riding under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Passengers should never be carried on a single-rider ATV.

Orthopaedic nurses witness first-hand the devastating effects of head and extremity injuries, those most commonly associated with ATV crashes. Rider safety and responsibility is paramount.

References

- Helmcamp, J.C., Aitken, M.E., & Lawrence, B. A. (2009). ATV and bicycle deaths and associated costs in the United States, 2000-2005 [Electronic version]. *Public Health Reports*, 124, 409-418.
- Kirkpatrick, R., Puffinbarger, W., & Sullivan, J.A. (2007). All-terrain vehicle injuries in children [Electronic version]. *Journal of Pediatric Orthopedics*, 7, 725-728.
- Shah, C. C., Ramakrishnaiah, R. H., Bhutta, S. T., Parnell-Beasley, D. N., & Greenberg, B. S. (2009). Imaging findings in 512 children following all-terrain vehicle injuries [Electronic version]. *Pediatric Radiology*, 39, 677-684.

Links

<http://www.atvsafety.gov/index.html>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/nsn/atv.html>

<http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/atv-safety-crisis-2003-final-all.pdf>

<http://www.atvsafety.org/>

<http://www.usa.safekids.org/searchresults.cfm>