

OFF-ROAD SAFETY

ATV SAFETY

The use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) has grown over recent years; The Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council reports that in the last three years, an average of 87,333 ATV's have been purchased in Canada in comparison to the International Snowmobile Manufacturers Association's which reported 45,477 snowmobile sales in Canada.

A report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) indicated that ATV-related hospitalizations have increased by 25% in just under a decade, rising from 3,296 in 1997 to 4,104 in 2005. Among ATV injuries, 10% were classified as severe in 2005.

According to the Canadian Paediatric Society in 2007, boys aged 15 to 19 are in the group with the highest rate of injuries. These vehicles are especially dangerous when used by children and young adolescents because they lack the knowledge, physical size and strength, and cognitive and motor skills to operate them safely.

The Porcupine Health Unit recommends proper training for all drivers from beginners to experienced ATV users, about safer riding practices. For example, National ATV Schools provides ATV rider training through Collège Boréal. To register please call your local Collège Boréal Campus. Check your local phone book for other providers.

In Ontario, there currently is no minimum age required to drive ATVs but there is a mandatory helmet law in place. Although no law is in place regarding age, many manufacturers have clearly indicated that if you are under 16, you shouldn't be riding an ATV.

National ATV Schools reports that dangerous activities include the following:

- Riding with more passengers than the manufacturer's recommendation.
- Riding without proper safety equipment.
- Children riding adult size ATVs which they cannot handle due to the excess in power, weight and size differences.
- Children riding unsupervised.
- Following too closely.
- Riding without proper training which often leads to rollover accidents.

For more information on ATV safety, please visit:
<http://www.gs.gov.nl.ca/gs/mr/atvsafety/>

