

Off-Road Vehicles



OFF-ROAD VEHICLES, including All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), can offer thrilling experiences for families, but they also pose significant risks, especially for children. Understanding these risks and implementing safety measures is crucial for keeping all passengers safe during off-road adventures.

Understanding the Risks

ATVs are popular for fun and work, especially in rural areas. But they can be dangerous when used inappropriately and without education:

■ Limited Protection

These vehicles don't have safety features like standard highway rated motor vehicles, so seemingly minor crashes can be very serious.

■ Speed and Stability Issues

ATVs can go faster than 65 mph. They can be hard to control on rough ground and can tip over easily, especially on paved roads.

■ Safety Standards

ATVs are not fully regulated by traffic safety organizations, making it hard to track incidents. Studies show that about 26% of ATV-related injuries involve kids under 16. **ATVs do not comply with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.*

Class 1 ATVs



Width 50 inches or less

Class 2 ATVs



Width greater than 50 inches but not more than 65 inches

Important Safety Tips

1 ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET

All riders should wear helmets and safety gear like gloves and goggles. All persons under 18 years of age must wear a helmet when operating or riding.



2 FOLLOW AGE LIMITS

Children under 16 should not operate adult-sized ATVs. Ensure that young riders are the appropriate age and size for the vehicle.



3 KNOW THE VEHICLE

Class 1 ATVs are primarily designed for one rider, while Class 2 ATVs can have passengers with seat belts. Some manufacturers advise Class 2 ATVs are not safe for young children who may not be able to secure themselves properly.



4 LIMIT PASSENGERS

Class 1 and 2 ATVs should never carry more than the manufacturer recommended number of passengers.

5 RIDE SAFELY

In a Class 2 ATV, always wear a seat belt, keep hands and feet inside, and never ride in the cargo area.

Why Car Seats Don't Work in Off-Road Vehicles

■ Not Built for Car Seats

ATVs are not designed for car seats, so using one is not safe. The safety features and crashworthiness of these vehicles differ significantly from standard passenger vehicles.

■ Manufacturer Guidelines

Most car seat manufacturers specify that their seats are only certified for use in passenger vehicles that meet NHTSA standards. Since off-road vehicles do not fit this classification, using child restraints in ATVs can lead to false security without adequate safety protection in the event of a crash.

■ What Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs) Should Know

CPSTs should educate families about the risks associated with using child restraints in off-road vehicles. It's important to communicate that the safety of young passengers relies on following manufacturer recommendations and local laws rather than attempting to adapt standard car seat practices to these non-traditional vehicles.



Safe Ride Reminders



CHECK YOUR VEHICLE

Before riding, make sure the brakes, tires, and other parts are working correctly.



STAY OFF PAVED ROADS

These vehicles are made for dirt and trails, not paved streets where they can tip over.



SUPERVISION AND TRAINING

Adults should always watch kids while they ride, and all riders should take safety training.

MN DNR Training Courses

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) offers safety training courses for youth and adults to promote responsible ATV operation. These courses cover essential safety practices, equipment usage, and riding techniques, including:

■ Youth ATV Safety Training

Designed for riders aged 10 to 15, this program covers the fundamentals of safe riding, including vehicle operation, safety gear, and risk management.

■ Hands-On Learning

Courses often include practical riding exercises under supervision to ensure participants gain real-world experience in a controlled environment.

■ Certification

Upon successful completion, participants may receive a safety certification, which is required for all operators born after July 1, 1987.

For more information and training registration, visit dnr.state.mn.us/safety/vehicle/atv.