

Using ATVs Safely During a Disaster

If trees are down on roads or roads are flooded, all terrain vehicles (ATVs) may assist in a rescue or provide transportation. If ATVs are used recklessly, they become hazardous. Some precautions to remember when adrenaline may be high during a disaster are:

- The terrain may not be what you expect after a disaster. Always use caution and use a moderate speed because ATVs may become airborne and overturn onto a victim.
- ATV momentum resists turning when you wish to avoid an obstacle. Loose gravel has caused some ATVs to slip and the victims have collided with trees.
- Helmets protect you from some head injuries and save lives.
- ATVs aren't designed for passengers. In a Consumer Product Safety injury survey, 31 percent of the injuries were to multiple riders.
- You cannot exercise too much care for a safe path. Barbed wires, single wire strands and gates are hard to see, especially at dusk or after dark. Head injuries are common from these barriers.
- Don't overload or put an unbalanced load on the ATV; on rough terrain the ATV is prone to overturn.
- Many accidents occur when one ATV follows another ATV too closely and rides "up" the rear wheels of the lead ATV. Overturns, especially at high speeds, may be fatal.
- An inexperienced rider should be trained properly and not allowed on an ATV during disaster emergencies.
- Misusing an ATV may put another in harm's way as well as yourself. Don't risk an injury or death, but consider operating an ATV as a privilege.

Following too closely, excessive speed and extra riders have caused dozens of deaths in Arkansas during the last few years. Injuries on ATVs are much too common. Remember that the Arkansas Code states, "It shall be unlawful for any person to operate an all-terrain vehicle upon public streets and highways of this state." There are situations where ATV road use is permitted, but an ATV collision with another vehicle is often fatal to the ATV operator. Operate your ATV wisely.