

Ride Smart: ATV and UTV Safety Tips for Every Driver

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and Utility Terrain Vehicles (UTVs) are popular for recreation, work, and adventure. They offer a thrilling way to explore the outdoors, but with that excitement comes responsibility. Every year, thousands of people—children and adults alike—are injured or killed in ATV/UTV crashes. The good news? Most of these incidents are preventable with proper training, protective gear, and responsible driving.

Whether you're a weekend trail rider or using these vehicles on the job, **safety must always come first.**

What's the Difference Between an ATV and UTV?

- **ATV (All-Terrain Vehicle):** Usually a single-rider vehicle (sometimes two), with handlebars, straddle seating, and designed for off-road use.
- **UTV (Utility Terrain Vehicle):** Also called side-by-sides, these have steering wheels, bench or bucket seats, and are typically used for work or group rides.

Both types of vehicles can be dangerous if misused or driven recklessly.

Essential ATV/UTV Safety Tips

1. Always Wear Protective Gear

- **Helmet:** DOT-approved helmets are a must, even for short rides.
- **Eye Protection:** Goggles or a visor protect against dust, debris, and branches.
- **Gloves, long sleeves, pants, and boots** help prevent scrapes, burns, and other injuries.

2. Take a Safety Course

- Formal training can teach handling skills, how to navigate terrain safely, and what to do in emergency situations.
- Many states require riders under a certain age to complete a certified course—check your local laws.

3. Ride the Right Vehicle for Your Age and Size

- **Children should never ride adult-sized ATVs.** They are too heavy, fast, and powerful for younger riders.
- Follow manufacturer guidelines on age limits and weight capacity.

4. Use Seat Belts and Safety Harnesses (UTVs)

- UTVs often come with roll cages and seat belts—use them every time.
- Doors or side nets should also be secured before riding.

5. Never Ride on Public Roads

- ATVs and UTVs are **not designed for highway use** and can be hard to see or control on paved roads.
- Use designated trails or private property, and always obey local laws and posted signs.

6. Don't Carry Extra Passengers

- Only ride with passengers if the vehicle is designed for it (check seat and restraint availability).
- Carrying passengers on single-rider ATVs can upset the balance and increase crash risk.

7. Avoid Riding Under the Influence

- Alcohol and drugs impair judgment, coordination, and reaction time—**just like with cars**.
- Never operate an ATV or UTV if you're impaired.

8. Check Your Vehicle Before Every Ride

- Inspect tires, brakes, throttle, lights, and fuel levels.
- Keep your vehicle well-maintained and report any issues before riding.

A Note on Youth Safety

- **Children under 16** are at particularly high risk for ATV injuries.
- Make sure kids:
 - Ride age-appropriate vehicles.
 - Are always supervised.
 - Wear all safety gear—**every single time**.

Trail Smart, Weather Smart

- Stay alert to changing terrain and weather conditions.
- Avoid steep hills, loose gravel, or wet trails that may cause rollovers.

- Ride during daylight hours and use lights if visibility is low.

ATVs and UTVs can be a great way to explore and enjoy the outdoors—but they are powerful machines that require skill, caution, and respect. Whether you ride for fun or for work, your safety—and the safety of those around you—should always come first.

Before you hit the trail: **Gear up. Know the rules. Ride responsibly.**