

Safety Experts Remind Parents: No Children under 16 on ATVs

Columbus, GA — While ATVs are part of daily life for many across the United States, whether for recreation or an occupation, Safe Kids Columbus recommends **that children under the age of 16 should never ride on, or operate, ATVs of any size - including youth-sized ATVs.**

“ATVs are inherently difficult to operate, and children do not have the cognitive and physical abilities to drive or ride these vehicles safely,” said Christy Hubbard, coordinator of Safe Kids Columbus. “If you’re not old enough to drive a car with safety belts on a paved road with traffic control devices, you’re certainly not old enough to drive a powerful open-seat vehicle at speeds up to 70 miles per hour over rough terrain.”

Nationwide, approximately 130 children under the age of 16 die each year as a result of ATV-related injuries, and an estimated 40,000 children under the age of 16 are seriously injured each year in ATV-related incidents. While a helmet can reduce the risk of severe head injuries, there are no safety devices that adequately protect against other injuries commonly sustained while riding ATVs.

The number of ATV-related injuries per year more than doubled between 1993 and 2006. In 2007, children accounted for one out of four ATV-related injuries. Beginning in 1998, the ATV industry observed voluntary guidelines restricting the sale of adult-sized ATVs (with engines bigger than 90 cc) for use by children under age 16, but compliance testing from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) showed numerous instances of noncompliance with the voluntary standard.

The *Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act*, signed into law in 2008, made the voluntary standard mandatory as of April 2009. The new law prohibits companies from recommending, marketing, or selling new adult-sized ATVs for use by persons under the age of 16. The law uses maximum speed, rather than engine size, for determining the age-appropriateness of ATVs and requires that new ATVs include labels and hangtags with certain safety information, including age recommendations. However, the law still permits the manufacture of youth-sized ATVs, which pose inherent safety risks.

“Previous efforts to make ATVs safer for kids have proved inadequate and have not kept children out of the emergency room,” said Hubbard. “Children can be seriously injured even on ATVs manufactured and marketed for kids.”

Rollovers, collisions and ejections involving ATVs can cause instantly fatal head injuries as well as serious nonfatal injuries to the head, spinal cord and abdomen. A child riding an ATV is four times more likely to be seriously injured than a rider over the age of 16.

“We know it’s not the advice a lot of parents want to hear, especially if ATVs are commonly used by friends and family, but it’s the conclusion we’ve drawn from extensive and ongoing review of the data,” said Christy Hubbard. “If you want our opinion as safety experts, there is simply no way to make ATV riding a safe activity for children.”

For more information about your local coalition activities, visit www.safekidscolumbusga.com. Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.

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