

PRESS RELEASE

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INJURIES AND DEATHS FROM ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES ARE INCREASING DRAMATICALLY

*Consumer and Conservation Advocates Team with Doctors in Report Documenting Crisis and Call
for Uniform National Safety Standards*

Washington, DC: The Consumer Federation of America, Natural Trails and Waters Coalition, Bluewater Network and doctors today called for new national and state rules to stop the increasing number of ATV-related injuries and fatalities. The report, entitled "All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety Crisis: America's Children at Risk," finds that the ATV industry's self-regulatory approach to safety, with minimal government oversight, fails to protect consumers - particularly children.

This report documents that self-regulation by the ATV industry has led to larger and faster ATVs and more children being killed and injured. Deaths and injuries are approaching those of the 1980s, when the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) banned three-wheel ATVs, said Rachel Weintraub, Assistant General Counsel at Consumer Federation of America. It is time for the CPSC and the states to end this hidden epidemic by acting aggressively to keep young children off ATVs and to strengthen safety standards.

All-terrain vehicles, commonly known by the acronym ATV, have been on the market for over 30 years. As injuries and deaths rose past 100,000 annually in the mid to late 1980s, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) - the federal agency that has jurisdiction over consumer products - forced the ATV industry to cease production of these highly-dangerous vehicles. However, they were replaced with four-wheel ATVs that have proven to be just as hazardous. The four-wheel ATVs are responsible for the safety crisis that exists today:

- * Between 1993 and 2001, the number of injuries caused by ATVs more than doubled to 111,700.
- * Between 1982 and 2001, at least 4,541 Americans were killed while riding ATVs.

The impacts on children under 16 are even more disturbing:

- * Between 1993 and 2001, the number of ATV-related injuries suffered by children under 16 increased 94% to 34,800.
- * Between 1982 and 2001, 1,714 children under age 16, including 799 under the age of 12, were killed in ATV accidents.

The ATV safety crisis poses a serious threat to the health of children too young to drive a car, said Dr. Rebecca Brown, Assistant Director of Trauma Services at Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati. Doctors and nurses in emergency rooms nationwide are treating increasing numbers of injured children every year. It is time to say enough is enough, and put the safety of our children first.

Every state has a comprehensive system to promote safety on America's roads and highways, including age limits and licensing and training requirements for every driver of a car. When it comes to ATVs, however, the same rules do not apply. For example, 24 states have no minimum age to drive an ATV and 19 states allow children ranging from 8 to 12 years old to drive them.

"ATVs are just as dangerous as cars or motorcycles, but not all states regulate them, even minimally," said Dr. Jim Helmkamp of the Center for Rural Emergency Medicine at West Virginia University. "Research demonstrates that the safety measures recommended by this report have helped to significantly reduce the risk of injury and death, and the resulting economic burden in states that have adopted them."

The report includes a series of recommendations, many of which have been developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and other health care professionals, that will better protect children, and every rider of an ATV:

1. No child under 16 should be allowed to operate ATVs under any circumstances;
2. Every state should adopt model legislation developed by the AAP concerning licensing, training, and other aspects of ATV safety; and
3. The CPSC should ban the use of adult-size ATVs by children under the age of 16 and require manufacturers to provide refunds for all three-wheel ATVs and adult-size four-wheel ATVs purchased for use by children under 16.

The Consumer Federation of America and eight other medical, consumer, and conservation groups also filed a petition with CPSC today. The petition calls on CPSC to take aggressive steps to protect children from the dangers posed by ATVs and to require manufacturers to refund consumers for adult-size ATVs bought for use by children under 16.

"Every year ATVs kill and injure thousands of our nation's children," said Sean Smith Bluewater Network's Public Lands Director. "It's time for industry and the federal government to heed the call of health care professionals and place the safety of our children ahead of the sale and use of these dangerous thrillcraft by minors."

"There may be as many as 7 million ATVs in use across the country today," said Scott Kovarovics, Director of the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition. "The damage they cause to public lands is severe and widespread, and their impact on children is alarming, and preventable."

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