ATV OPERATIONS

Step 1:   IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS: Let's look at the hazards associated with ATV operations:

  • Experience of operator
  • Accidents (falls, rollovers, collisions)
  • Weather (wind, cold, and heat)
  • Location (river, stream, forest, hilly and rocky terrain)
  • Wildlife (moose, bears, wolves, and insects)
  • Exceeding limitations (operator or ATV)
  • Fueling (spills, vapors, and explosions)
  • Lost or stranded
  • Drinking

Step 2:   ASSESS THE RISK: Then assess the impact of each hazard in terms of potential loss and severity:

  • Has the operator received required training
  • Injuries associated with accidents and collisions: sprains, fractures, lacerations, head injuries, contusions, burns, etc.
  • Incidents related to the weather and water: dehydration, hypothermia, exposure, and drowning
  • Animal attacks, maulings, insect-borne diseases, and skin irritations
  • Possible accident injuring the operator or damage to the ATV
  • Fire or explosions
  • Is your riding area marked, are you prepared to spend the night
  • Intoxication, impaired judgment, and reaction time

Step 3:   MAKE RISK DECISIONS: Once you have identified the hazards and assessed the associated risk, you should develop risk control options.   Start with the most serious risk first and select controls that will reduce the risk to a minimum consistent with mission accomplishment.   Decide on some controls that can be employed to reduce or mitigate the hazards:

  • Training.   Take an ATV training course.   Be thoroughly familiar with the machine and how to operate it properly.   Read and comply with manufacturer's instructions for safe operations
  • Start with a good plan.   Always plan in advance to avoid costly errors.   Consider all the possibilities of something going wrong and be prepared for it

• Check the weather prior to starting.   Depending on duration and location of travel, get a forecast of the weather and plan accordingly.   Remember the weather can change abruptly, so always prepare for the worst
• Inspect the ATV prior to operating.   Ensure it is mechanically sound
• Familiarize yourself with the area and respect to the terrain.   Travel in areas where ATVs are permitted.   Avoid streams, rivers, muddy trails, and steep hillsides.   Never operate an ATV on paved surfaces, they are designed for off road use only
• Don't travel alone in remote, unpopulated areas, and avoid splitting up if traveling with a group.   Let someone know where you're going and when to expect your return.   Have a map and/or Global Positioning System (GPS)
• Never ride with passengers and don't attempt wheelies, jumps, or stunts
• Ensure Personal Protective Equipment is worn (helmet, goggles, boots, gloves, long sleeve shirt or jacket, and long pants)
• Know your physical limitations and the limitations of the ATV and don't exceed them. Don't operate an ATV at excessive speeds
• Use extreme care when fueling.   Fuel in well-ventilated areas and take precautions against static discharge
• Be familiar with the kinds of wildlife around you; their behavior and the actions to take if you encounter them
• Never consume alcohol or drugs before or while operating an ATV

With selected controls in place, decide if the benefit outweighs the risk.   If risk outweighs benefits or if assistance is required to implement controls, communicate with higher authority in the chain of command.   You need to either accept the risk, avoid the risk, reduce the risk, or spread the risk.   Do not make dumb decisions.

Step 4:   IMPLEMENT CONTROLS: Once you select appropriate controls, implement them!   A plan is only good if it is followed.

Step 5:   SUPERVISE: As always, the situation is subject to change quickly.   Monitor the situation and adjust as necessary to keep things under control.   Summer is a great time to have fun and we all deserve a break every now and then.   From now on, use risk management to make your summer fun, memorable, and safe. No one wants a summer outing to turn into a tragedy!

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