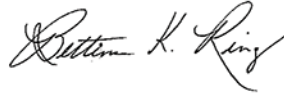


Policy and Procedure 8-19

Workplace Safety – ATV and UTV Operations

Issued By: Bettina K. Ring, State Forester



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Codes/Mandates: OSHA General Duty Clause
OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.132, Personal Protective Equipment
OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.133, Eye and Face Protection
ANSI Z87.1-1989, “American National Standard Practice for Occupational and Educational Eye and Face Protection”
OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.135, Head Protection
OSHA standard 29 CFR 1910.138, Hand Protection
Code of Virginia [§46.2-915.1](#), All-terrain vehicles and off-road motorcycles; penalty.

References: N/A

Forms: N/A

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PURPOSE

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) can be dangerous. An estimated 90,000 individuals are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms for ATV-related injuries. Nearly 10,000 individuals are hospitalized each year and more than 120 deaths are reported. VDOF personnel have been involved in a share of ATV accidents, including several that were considered “near-miss.” The overriding intent of the ATV and UTV Operations policy and procedures is to provide the framework for training and procedures that will help prevent accidents and injuries from occurring as a result of their operation and to ensure compliance with governing legislation. This policy and procedure provides the process for training; certification and recertification of operators; training and recertification of instructors; rules for operation of ATVs and UTVs, and assignment of responsibilities to staff positions.

POLICY

It is the position of VDOF that ATV and UTV operations be conducted in accordance with OSHA standards and State Legislative Code regarding such and that all operators will conform to the Agency rules and training requirements contained in this policy and procedure. Before an employee operates an ATV or UTV, they must participate in a training program that adequately prepares them to safely handle the vehicle. No VDOF employee shall operate an ATV or UTV while on work time unless they have satisfactorily completed the training and comply with the procedures set forth in this policy and procedure.

DEFINITIONS

“**Agency**” and “**VDOF**” means the Virginia Department of Forestry.

“**Commonwealth**” means the Commonwealth of Virginia.

“**ATV [All-terrain vehicle]**” shall mean a three-wheeled or four-wheeled motor vehicle generally characterized by large, low-pressure tires, a seat designed to be straddled by the operator and handlebars for steering, which is intended for off-road use by an individual rider on various types of non-paved terrain.

“**ATV /UTV instructor**” shall mean a person who is qualified to teach the VDOF ATV Rider Course, the Nursery and Grounds Operator course, refresher and advanced workshops and conduct instructor training/mentoring.

“**UTV [utility vehicle]**” shall mean any four- or six-wheeled motor vehicles generally characterized by large, low-pressure tires, a bench type seat and a steering wheel, which is intended for off-road use by one or more persons on various types of non-paved terrain.

“**UTV instructor**” shall mean a person who is qualified to teach the Nursery and Grounds Operator course and any subsequent refresher training workshops.

“**VLC**” means Virginia Learning Center

PROCEDURES

Responsible Parties

Agency safety officer is responsible for development and oversight of the overall ATV safety program. This includes developing the educational component, recordkeeping and ensuring overall agency compliance.

The **ATV Safety and Training Committee** is charged with the development and implementation of the ATV safety training program. The committee is composed of regional ATV instructors, one of whom is the committee chair and the agency safety officer. The committee makes all recommendations concerning ATV use and reviews all accidents/incidents involving ATVs. Recommendations are communicated to VDOF management through the agency safety officer.

ATV instructors are responsible for obtaining trainer certification through the ATV Safety Institute's Instructor Certification Program or through the VDOF ATV Instructor Mentoring Program; maintaining certification (see Instructor Certification section); teaching the VDOF ATV Rider Course to full-time and part-time Agency employees; train-the-trainer and instruction of the Nursery and Grounds Operator course; assessing critical training needs, and offering refresher and advanced training to staff.

Supervisors are responsible for identifying employees who must operate ATVs and who need training; making certain that their employees are in compliance with training requirements before operating such vehicles, and ensuring that their employees follow safe operating procedures when using ATVs.

Unit safety training coordinators are responsible for assessing the need for ATV training and setting up ATV training courses within their assigned area as needs dictate. This includes, but is not limited to, scheduling instructors, locating and securing facilities, handling logistics and assisting during the course if needed.

ATV /UTV operators are responsible for attending and passing the appropriate training course for their job requirements before operating an ATV/UTV; renewal of operational certification as required by this section, and adherence to all safety rules and accepted operational procedures.

Basic Operating Rules

- ◆ Any person who operates an ATV or UTV must complete and pass the VDOF ATV Rider Course prior to operation. Except, persons who operate UTVs for farming or building and grounds maintenance activities at VDOF Forestry Centers or facilities may opt to complete the UTV Nursery and Grounds Operator course prior to operation. This course may be used in lieu of the Rider course when the following criteria are met:
 - Operators are only operating UTVs in the course of their work, not ATVs.
 - The UTV is being used only in farming or grounds maintenance type activities.
 - The terrain where the UTV is to be used must be open (such as farm fields, graded trails, lawns and paved roadways) and low grade.
- ◆ Operators/riders will adhere to the personal protective equipment requirements as outlined in this plan during the operation of an ATV or UTV.
- ◆ Operators of UTVs equipped with seatbelts will wear a seat belt at all times when operating the vehicle.
- ◆ Any loads carried on, or equipment mounted to, an ATV or UTV will conform to manufacturer load recommendations. Operators will reference and adhere to the owner's manual or machine label for cargo ratings.
- ◆ Any modifications made to a machine for carrying equipment or gear will conform to manufacturer ratings/designs.
- ◆ Operators will maintain control of the vehicle by using both hands while driving.
- ◆ When using an ATV or UTV during fire operations, the operator will maintain communications with operational staff whenever possible.
- ◆ Riders should have a second person on site when operating an ATV or UTV.
- ◆ VDOF ATVs and UTVs will not be operated by persons under the age of 16.
- ◆ At no time will the passenger load of an ATV or UTV exceed that for which the machine is rated.
- ◆ ATVs will not be operated on any public highway except when:
 - It is necessary to cross the highway and then only by the most direct route, or
 - When responding to an emergency.
- ◆ In no circumstance shall the speed when driving an ATV or UTV exceed 20 mph.
- ◆ Operators will always practice care for the environment.

- ◆ All accidents/incidents involving an ATV or UTV must be reported to supervisor.
- ◆ Supervisors will suspend driving privileges if an operator is involved in an ATV or UTV accident that causes bodily injury or damage to property, or has a near-miss incident until any remedial actions have been concluded.
- ◆ Operators will conduct a pre-ride inspection of the machine before operating with the following included in that inspection:
 - **Tires and Wheels** – Make sure air pressure in tires is as recommended and check for cuts or gouges. Tighten axle nuts and secure by a cotter pin.
 - **Controls and Cables** – Check location and make sure all work. Throttle should move smoothly when handlebar is in different positions. Brakes should be properly adjusted and foot shift firmly fastened.
 - **Lights and Electrical System** – Ignition switch should stop engine when in “off” position and when in “on” position, headlights and taillights should work.
 - **Oil and Fuel** – Check oil and fuel levels.
 - **Chain and/or Drive Shaft Chassis** – Inspect, adjust and lubricate chain and/or drive-shaft chassis. Check for nuts and bolts loosened by vibration.
- ◆ Operators will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- ◆ ATV’s will be started using the “BONEC” steps:
 - **Brakes** – Ensure that the parking brakes are on.
 - **On** – Turn the fuel cap vent or valve and the ignition key to on position.
 - **Neutral** – Put the transmission in the neutral position and check by rocking the vehicle.
 - **Engine** – Turn the engine stop switch to “run” or “start” position.
 - **Choke** – If the engine is cold, put the choke in the “on” position and start the engine according to the manual.

Required Personal Protective Equipment for Field Operation

Head Protection

- ◆ Approved agency-issued helmets are required at all times when operating an ATV as well as a UTV that is not equipped with a roll bar. If an employee feels that it would be unsafe to wear an issued helmet in a particular situation (such as firefighting), then the ATV should not be used. Helmets used for bicycling, skateboarding and rollerblading will not be considered acceptable replacements for approved helmets, nor will hardhats.
- ◆ When using a UTV that is equipped with a roll bar, the operator may substitute a hardhat for a helmet as long as the chinstrap is secured and seat belts are used.
- ◆ VDOF will issue approved, properly sized, helmets to staff that are assigned ATVs as well as make them available to staff that use ATVs intermittently.
- ◆ Beginning January 1, 2007, all new VDOF-issued helmets will be equipped with full chin protection and face shields.

Eye Protection

- ◆ When driving an ATV or UTV, the operator is exposed to a variety of eye hazards including smoke; flying debris, such as dust, rocks, dirt, insects, mud and water, and impact from branches and twigs. A person who is exposed to any of these hazards while driving an ATV or UTV can lose control of the vehicle. Therefore:
 - Eye protection is required at all times when operating an ATV or UTV for field operations. The type of eye protection required (i.e., face shield, goggle or safety glasses) depends, in part, on the hazards that are present, since different eyewear protects the eyes in varying degrees. Below are the eye protection options for operators of ATVs or UTVs:

- A full-face helmet with a face shield (in the down position) is acceptable eye protection for all situations.
 - Goggles must be used in situations when smoke and dust are present, unless the operator is wearing a helmet with a full-face shield and uses the shield.
 - Safety glasses or goggles may be used in situations that are lacking smoke and dust.
- ◆ Regardless of the type of eye protection being used, if visibility is compromised while operating an ATV or UTV the driver will cease operation until the hazard is moderated to a level where safe operation can commence.
 - ◆ VDOF will issue approved, properly sized, goggles to staff that are assigned ATVs as well as make them available to staff that use ATVs intermittently. Employees who wear eyeglasses will be issued eye protection that is designed to be worn over prescription lenses. Employees may provide their own goggles or safety glasses as long as they are labeled as meeting ANSI Z87.1 – 1989.

Hand Protection

- ◆ When driving an ATV or UTV the operator is exposed to a variety of hand hazards such as impact from branches, twigs and rocks. Gloves are worn to protect the hands from scrapes and scratches as well as to improve grip on the controls and to reduce soreness from the pressure and vibration of holding onto the handle bars.
- ◆ Gloves will be worn at all times when operating an ATV or UTV for field operations.
 - While using an ATV or UTV for wildland fire suppression activities, approved fire line gloves will be used.
 - In non-fire situations, gloves composed of synthetic materials may be used.
 - Gloves will be properly sized for the individual.

Foot Protection

- ◆ While operating an ATV or UTV boots are vital for protecting the feet from trail debris, shielding the lower leg from muffler burns and keeping the feet properly positioned on the footrest so that the driver can maintain balance and control.
- ◆ Boots will be worn at all times when operating an ATV for field operations. The footwear recommended when driving an ATV is a leather boot that extends above the ankle and has soles that will grip the footrests.

Leg and Arm Protection

- ◆ Using an ATV or UTV to traverse woody terrain can expose a rider's arms and legs to contact with branches, twigs, briars, etc. The resultant cuts and scrapes can be reduced or eliminated by wearing protective outerwear.
- ◆ Long pants must be worn any time an ATV or UTV is being used for field operations.
- ◆ Long sleeves will be worn in those situations where exposure to impact hazards to the arms is imminent. Such exposure situations should be avoided on high heat index days, when the wearing of such apparel could result in a heat-related illness.

Required Personal Protective Equipment for Operation of UTVs During Nursery and Grounds Maintenance

- ◆ Supervisors will identify job hazards and assign the appropriate PPE for operators to use prior to conducting daily tasks. This will involve analysis of the work area for specific hazards to the face, eyes, head, feet, hands, arms/legs and torso. For instance, eye protection would be required if personnel are traveling on a dusty roadway; when traveling on paved roadways, unless other hazards exist, it would not be needed. When traversing along a wooded trail, head, eye, arm and leg protection would likely be needed; whereas, it would not be needed when on a paved roadway.
- ◆ Seatbelts will be worn whenever personnel are traveling in a UTV that is equipped with seatbelts.

Hauling ATVs and UTVs

- ◆ ATVs and UTVs will only be hauled on a trailer.
- ◆ Trailers, hitches and balls used for hauling ATVs or UTVs must be rated for the weight of the machine plus any additional equipment.
- ◆ Four tie-down mechanisms shall be used to secure an ATV or UTV to a trailer for travel. These can be a combination of ratchet straps, chains, winches, tire cradles, etc. Each must have a minimum strength equal to at least half the weight of the ATV or UTV being hauled.
- ◆ Tie-down mechanisms should be hooked to the frame of the ATV when possible. In no circumstance will they be hooked to cargo racks. When attaching the straps to the frame, they will not rub on the edge of a surface that may cause them to wear or cut through.
- ◆ Independent tie-down mechanisms should be hooked to the two front and the two rear corners of the machine (or there about) and extended out and hooked to the corners of the trailer (or there about).
- ◆ The vehicle should be tightened down so that the suspension is compressed as much as possible. Compressing the suspension prevents the ATV from bouncing while in transport – bouncing is one of the main reasons that tie-downs come loose and inflict stress on straps. One way to help achieve this is to have someone sit on the ATV while another cinches it down.
- ◆ VDOF will supply approved tie-downs.
- ◆ Tie-downs should be inspected for wear and tear before each use. Tie-downs exhibiting signs of deterioration (cuts, abrasion, loose stitching, malfunctioning ratchets, etc.) will be replaced immediately. Tie-downs of the fabric type shall be replaced every four years, minimally.
- ◆ Bearings on trailer shall be checked annually by a qualified mechanic.
- ◆ Safety chains connecting the trailer and vehicle shall be cradled (crossed).

Training

Field Operator Training

- ◆ Any person who operates an ATV or UTV for any field operation for VDOF must take and pass a VDOF ATV Rider Course (or substitute course approved by the agency safety officer) prior to operation of these vehicles. The content and format of this course is based on the ATV Institute's Rider course and is modified to include VDOF specific procedures and policies. The course is approximately four hours.
- ◆ Operators must take a refresher course every five years to maintain their operator privileges. Refresher course content will be at the discretion of the instructor and based on localized training needs.
- ◆ In the event of an ATV or UTV accident, the regional ATV instructor will review the accident investigation findings and determine if retraining or refresher training is called for. Operator driving privileges will be suspended until any remedial training has been completed.

Nursery and Grounds Operator Training

- ◆ Any person who operates a UTV for farming or building and grounds maintenance type activities at VDOF Forestry Centers or facilities may opt to complete the UTV Nursery and Grounds Operator Course rather than the ATV Rider Course when ALL of the following criteria are met:
 - The operator is only operating a UTV in the course of their work, not an ATV.
 - The jobs performed are strictly related to farming or grounds maintenance type activities.

- The terrain where the UTV is to be used is open (such as farm fields, graded trails, lawns and paved or gravel roadways) and of low grade.
- ◆ The content of the course will include the differences between the handling of an ATV and UTV; safety requirements; identifying job safety concerns; how to conduct pre-ride inspections; transporting a UTV; safe operating practices; VDOF specific operational rules, and a field proficiency exercise. The course is approximately one to one and half hours.

Instructor Certification

VDOF Rider Course

- ◆ ATV instructors for VDOF must pass:
 - The VDOF ATV Rider Course, and
 - The ATV Safety Institute's Instructor Preparation Course, or the VDOF ATV Instructor Mentoring Program.
 - The mentoring program will use current VDOF ATV instructors to mentor instructor-candidates on how to teach the ATV Institute's ATV Rider Course and supplemental information on VDOF specific ATV policies and procedures. The VDOF mentoring program will be conducted by a person who has completed the ATV Institute's Instructor Preparation course or the VDOF ATV mentoring program. Instructor candidates must show proficiency in teaching all sections of the ATV Rider Course and supplemental information regarding VDOF ATV policies and procedures.
- ◆ Instructor Trainers will notify the agency VLC administrator when an instructor candidate has completed the mentoring program. The VLC administrator will add the ATV/UTV Instructor credential to the employee's training record.
- ◆ Instructors who wish to maintain an ATV Institute Instructor certification should follow the Institute's guidelines for instructor recertification. Those typically include teaching a minimum of two classes per year and attending an instructor training workshop, sponsored by the ATV Institute, every two years. Check with the institute for their requirements.
- ◆ Instructors who wish to maintain only a VDOF credential for teaching ATV training should teach, or co-teach a minimum of one class every two years and attend advanced training as provided.

Nursery and Grounds Operator Course

- ◆ Instructors for the VDOF UTV Nursery and Grounds Operation Course must:
 - Pass the VDOF ATV Rider Course
 - Complete a walk-through of the content and teaching aids in the Nursery and Grounds Operator Course with the agency safety officer or appointed ATV or UTV Instructor
- ◆ The trainer will notify the agency VLC administrator when an instructor candidate has completed the needed qualifications. The VLC administrator will add the training credential to the employee's training record.

AUTHORITY

This policy and procedure is issued by the Virginia state forester.

INTERPRETATION

The director of human resources and agency safety officer are responsible for the interpretation of this policy and procedure.