

Off-highway vehicles (OHVs), including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), utility task vehicles (UTVs), and other motorized equipment designed for off-road travel and work activities, offer versatility but also pose significant safety risks. One of the most severe and traumatic claims ever experienced by a Member employee covered by the Risk Pool involved a UTV accident, underscoring the dangers associated with these vehicles. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), from 2018 to 2022, an estimated 504,400 emergency room-treated injuries in the United States were linked to OHVs. Additionally, the CPSC has reported there are around 700 fatalities related to OHV-related incidents in most years. To minimize the risk of accidents and injuries, it is essential to follow safety best practices when operating OHVs. The following guidelines can help ensure safer use of these vehicles in both recreational and occupational settings.

**1 Inspections (Pre/Post):** Conduct a thorough pre-trip inspection, verify the off-highway vehicle is in proper working condition. Inspect the slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem (if applicable), warning lights, brakes, and other safety features.



**2 Seat Belts and Rollover Protection:** Always wear seat belts when operating off-highway vehicles. If your utility vehicle is equipped with roll-over protection structures (ROPS), ensure they are in good working condition and used as intended. Only transport the same number of passengers as there are seatbelts or seats.

**3 Driver Operations:** Ensure all employees are well-trained in the safe operation of off-highway vehicles. This includes proper use of controls, handling, and maneuvering techniques. Refer to the Texas Transportation Code 551A.001 for rules and regulations. Employers should strongly consider requiring employees have a valid driver's license as a basic requirement for operation.



**4 Loading or Unloading:** Avoid using steep ramps for loading or unloading. Use a ramp that can withstand the combined weight of the off-highway vehicle and its rider. Attach the ramp securely to the trailer or pickup using straps or chains.



**5 Proper Storage:** Remove or disconnect the battery or connect to a battery tender when storing. Keep the fuel tank filled to prevent condensation, check oil and fluids, inflate your tires to specifications to prevent flat spots or dry rotting, protect the intake system, and cover any open breather or air intake systems while stored for lengthy amounts of time.

#### LEARN MORE WITH THESE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Training Video Network: Utility Cart Safety](#)
- ATV Safety Institute: [The Golden Rules](#)
- Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations (TDLR): [Off-Highway Vehicle Training](#)
- Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association: [Safety Rules](#)