

For Immediate Release
December 20, 2010

Contact:
Rachel Weintraub, CFA (202) 387-6121
Erin Wallace, AAP (202) 724-3303

ATVs: The Wrong Choice for Children This Holiday Season
Numbers of ATV Deaths and Injuries Still High Though Trending Downward

Washington, DC – According to data released by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, child deaths and serious injuries caused by all-terrain vehicles appear to have decreased in 2009. Tragically, however, at least 61 children lost their lives and 37,700 were injured seriously enough to require treatment in a hospital emergency department.

“While the latest data from the CPSC indicate that the numbers of deaths and injuries caused by ATVs declined in 2009 as compared to 2008, ATVs remain the cause of hundreds of deaths and well over a hundred thousand injuries a year,” stated Rachel Weintraub, Director of Product Safety for Consumer Federation of America. “We need to research why these numbers have declined, replicate what is helping to reduce deaths and injuries, and work harder to reduce these numbers more significantly.”

"ATVs are one 'toy' that should not be on any child's Christmas list," said O. Marion Burton, MD, FAAP, president of the American Academy of Pediatrics. "Children are not developmentally capable of operating these heavy, complex machines. The American Academy of Pediatrics warns all parents that no child under the age of 16 should drive or ride an ATV."

The CPSC released its 2009 Annual Report of ATV-Related Deaths and Injuries on December 20. Major findings include:

- Estimates of serious injuries requiring emergency room treatment among people of all ages decreased by a not statistically significant 2.4 percent, from 135,100 in 2008 to 131,900 in 2009.
- The overall increase of 20 percent between the estimated number of injuries in 2001 (110,100) and 2009 (131,900) is statistically significant. Trend analysis by CPSC indicates that for all ATVs, there is a statistically significant upward trend in emergency room visits for people of all ages during the years 2001 through 2009.
- The estimated number of ATV-related fatalities for all ages decreased from 857 in 2007 to 780 in 2009. The agency notes, however, that the 2009 data is not considered complete.
- In 2009, ATVs killed at least 61 children younger than 16, accounting for 16 percent of fatalities. Forty eight percent of children killed were younger than 12 years old.

- Children under 16 suffered an estimated 32,400 serious injuries in 2009 – or 25 percent of all injuries. The 2009 emergency department-treated injury estimate for children younger than 16 years of age represents a 14 percent decrease, which is a statistically significant decrease over the 2008 estimate.

It is important to note that there is always a lag with death reports making their way to CPSC and therefore the 2009 statistics should not be considered complete. For example, when child death statistics for the year 2006 were first reported in 2007, the number stood at 111; since that time, additional data collection has increased that number to 143.

In 2006, consumer groups filed a petition with the CPSC calling for CPSC to ban the sale of adult-size ATVs for use by children. While the agency under the leadership of Chairman Hal Stratton denied the petition, the CPSC began a rulemaking process to create new ATV safety standards. CPSC Chairman Inez Tenenbaum has reinvigorated the rulemaking process and directed staff to follow the mandate of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act and pass new federal safety rules. Both Consumer Federation of America and AAP continue to call upon the agency to reject the manufacture of a transitional, “youth model” ATV for 14- to 16-year-olds capable of traveling at speeds up to 38 miles per hour.

The CPSC, industry and many consumer advocates recommend that children ages 12 through 15 not ride ATVs with engines larger than 90 cc’s. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that no child under age 16 ride an ATV of any size.

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The Consumer Federation of America is an association of nearly 300 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education. www.consumerfed.org

American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. www.aap.org