

Elko County Commissioners  
Elko County, Nevada  
571 Idaho Street, Elko,  
Nevada 89801

May 1, 2014

Dear County Commissioner:

As individuals and organizations dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries caused by All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), we urge you to oppose efforts to allow recreational riding of ATVs on Elko County Highways.

The proposed Elko county ordinance would allow ATV use on designated county highways. This expansion of ATV access to roads is contrary to public safety and puts the operator and others at risk of severe injury or death.

ATVs should not be driven on public roads because driving ATVs on public roads is more dangerous than operating them off-road, ATVs are not designed for roadway use, and ATV manufacturers have policy statements strongly urging consumers not to operate their vehicles on public roads.

ATV roadway crashes account for over 60% of deaths and over 30% of serious injuries. Roadway crashes are more likely to involve multiple fatalities, carrying passengers, collisions and head injuries. Victims in roadway crashes were less likely to be wearing protective gear such as helmets and were more likely to be carrying passengers.

Most importantly, ATVs are not designed to operate on paved or public roads. An ATV's narrow wheelbase and high clearance are designed for riding in pastures, fields and wooded areas. The high center of gravity increases the risk of rollovers, particularly at roadway speeds. In addition, ATV's knobby, low-pressure tires allow for operation on a variety of surfaces, but they do not grip roadway surfaces well (paved or unpaved). As tire-surface interaction deteriorates with increasing speed, the operator can lose control of the vehicle, endangering not only the ATV rider but also occupants of other vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. In addition, many ATVs lack a rear differential which can compound on-road handling challenges. The lack of a rear differential results in the wheels on both the inside and outside of a turn rotating at the same speed even though the wheels on the outside of the turn cover more distance. This design problem is mitigated on off-road surfaces like dirt and grass but makes the machine much more difficult to control on-road.

The Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA), a not-for-profit association representing ATV manufacturers and dealers, has a strong policy statement against the use of ATVs on public roads. A training manual for ATV riders from the ATV Safety Institute, a division of SVIA, states:

Remember, ATVs are intended for off-road use only. Never operate an ATV on public roads, and always avoid paved surfaces. ATVs are not designed for use on public roads and other motorists may not see you. ATVs are not designed to be used on paved surfaces because pavement may seriously affect handling and control.”<sup>1</sup>

Further, the SVIA makes clear that:

ATVs are designed, manufactured and sold for off-road use only. On-road vehicles must be manufactured and certified to comply with U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS). These safety standards consist of extensive and detailed compliance requirements. Since ATVs are not intended to be used on-road, they are not designed, equipped or tested to meet such standards.<sup>2</sup>

This statement shows that the manufactures of these vehicles, those who know the vehicles better than anyone, are clear that they should not be operated on public roads. In addition, the mandatory rules for ATVs require that all ATVs have a label indicating that ATVs should not be operated on paved roads or on public roads.

Consumer Federation of America (<http://www.consumerfed.org/pdfs/ATVs-on-roadways-03-2014.pdf>) and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (<http://www.iihs.org/frontend/iihs/documents/masterfiledocs.ashx?id=2056>) recently released reports documenting the dangerous trends associated with ATV operation on public roads.

We urge you to oppose the ordinance expanding ATV use to public roads because it places the public including ATV operators, pedestrians, bicyclists, and all motor vehicle drivers and their passengers at unnecessary risk.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Available on the web at [http://www.atvsafety.org/InfoSheets/ATV\\_Riding\\_Tips.pdf](http://www.atvsafety.org/InfoSheets/ATV_Riding_Tips.pdf) on page 7.

<sup>2</sup> Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, “Position in Opposition to On-Road Operation of ATVs,” available on the web at <http://wisdotresearch.wi.gov/wp-content/uploads/tsratvlaws1.pdf>.

Rachel Weintraub  
Legislative Director and Senior Counsel  
Consumer Federation of America

Sue DeLoretto-Rabe  
Co-Founder  
Concerned Families for ATV Safety

Gerene Denning, PhD  
Emergency Medicine  
University of Iowa  
Iowa ATV Injury Prevention Task Force

Benjamin Hoffman MD FAAP  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Medical Director, Doernbecher  
Children's Safety Center  
Portland, OR

Katie Kearney  
Concerned Families  
for ATV safety Member  
Massachusetts Safety Advocate

Mary Aitken, MD MPH  
Director, Injury Prevention Center  
at Arkansas Children's Hospital

Jamie Schaefer-Wilson  
Executive Director  
The Safety Institute

Michael Best  
Policy Advocate  
Consumer Federation of America

Carolyn Anderson  
Co-Founder  
Concerned Families for ATV Safety

Charles Jennissen, MD  
Emergency Medicine  
University of Iowa  
Iowa ATV Injury Prevention  
Task Force

Ben Kelley  
Director, Injury Control Policy  
The Trauma Foundation  
San Francisco General Hospital  
San Francisco, CA

Robin D. Schier, DNP, APRN,  
CPNP AC/PC  
Pediatric Emergency Medicine  
Texas Children's Hospital  
Houston, Texas

Gary A. Smith, MD, DrPH  
President, Child Injury  
Prevention Alliance