



Sixteen States have Documented Increases in OHV- Related Emergency Room Visits During the COVID-19 Pandemic

All-terrain vehicles (ATV), recreational off-highway vehicles (ROVs), and the inclusive term of numerous off-road vehicles, off-highway vehicles (OHV) pose several hazards to riders in addition to the general risk of crashing. Penetration injuries where external objects such as terrain penetrate the vehicle or enter the rider's space are also a hazard. Fire risk has also been the cause of many OHV recalls. Safety concerns such as lack of helmet use, operation on roads, alcohol consumption, and absence of supervision also contribute to OHV deaths and injuries.

The incidents below have been identified as occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. The behavioral changes that many people experienced due to school and work closures have been linked to a number of increases in product safety injuries and deaths including OHVs. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has documented that there has been a 39% increase in OHV, moped, and minibike injuries.¹ The analysis below includes articles that specifically include an increase in OHV incidents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arkansas

In July of 2020, hospitals reported seeing a rise in OHV injuries, particularly in children. Doctors at Children's Hospital, Arkansas reported an alarming "33% increase of child ATV crash injuries compared to the same time last year. They've had 81 cases and most of them come from side-by-side ATV's."²

California

Rady Children's Hospital in California reported an increase in OHV injuries requiring trauma treatment in 2020 than it had "...in 2017 and 2019 combined," The data revealed that fewer than 60% of those who sustained OHV injuries wore helmets, head injuries were the most common, and operating room and ICU visits were most often for skull fractures and brain bleeds. The ages of patients ranged from 2 years old to 17 years old, most of which fell between 11 years and 15 years. California safety courses require children under 14 be directly supervised by an adult who has taken a safety course. Rady Hospital provides a link with tips to prevent injury.³

¹ Consumer Product Safety Commission. (2021, January). Effect of Novel Coronavirus Pandemic on 2020 Preliminary NEISS Estimates (March-September, 2020). Retrieved July 1, 2021 from https://cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/Effect%20of%20Novel%20Coronavirus%20Pandemic%20on%202020%20Preliminary%20NEISS%20Estimates%20%28March%20%E2%80%93September%202020%29.pdf?eBqDdRMGIEQOtp.VG_9IdBCjIFk262hu

² Howington, J. (2020, July 30). 12-year-old barely survives ATV crash, doctors say these cases are on the rise. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://www.thv11.com/article/sports/outdoors/atv-crash-cases-rise/>

³ KUSI Newsroom. (2021, March 23). Desert dangers: all-terrain vehicle injuries for children are on the rise. Retrieved June 28th, 2021, from <https://www.kusi.com/desert-dangers-all-terrain-vehicle-injuries-for-children-are-on-the-rise/>

Colorado

The Children's Hospital of Colorado in Colorado Springs has documented a "118% increase in the number of trauma cases presented in the emergency department. The majority of trauma cases are accidental and related to falls, sports injuries, bike accidents, trampoline injuries, bites, ATV accidents, car accidents, etc."⁴

The injury prevention coordinator at Children's Hospital Colorado, Colorado Springs, Amanda Abramczyk-Thill, stated in an interview with Fox21News, that "It's really only advised to let a child ride an ATV, drive or ride it if they're 16 years old or older, kind of like that driver license age."⁵

Florida

In three articles from May and June 2020, doctors in Florida have documented a "dramatic increase"⁶ in "the number of children in the hospital with all-terrain vehicle-related injuries" due to the COVID-19 epidemic school closures.⁷ Dr. Marie Crandall, a professor of surgery at the University of Florida College of Medicine in Jacksonville stated, "We have seen a dramatic increase in the kids that come in with injuries from ATVs as compared to previous years... in a typical year while children are still in school, there are up to three injuries a month from ATVs severe enough that children are taken to the hospital. This year, doctors have seen five to ten incidents a month and up to two or three deaths every month, mostly because of ATV traumatic brain injuries."⁸

This upsurge has resulted in a 5% increase in severe OHV incidents requiring an emergency room visit with children in the last few months. Crandall has seen these severe brain injuries first-hand and believes there's a direct correlation between the rise in accidents and COVID-19.⁹

Dr. Crandall stressed the importance of riders and drivers wearing a helmet and parental supervision when children are driving an ATV.¹⁰

Georgia

Similarly in Georgia, doctors at Piedmont Columbus Regional are seeing an increase in OHV injuries during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Since the pandemic kids from ages 3 to 15 have been coming in and out of the hospital for treatment. The accidental injuries have increased because

⁴ Cronin, I. (2020, June 05). Your Healthy Family: Trauma visits up at Children's in Colorado Springs. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.koaa.com/community/your-healthy-family/your-healthy-family-er-visits-up>

⁵ Dawidowicz, C. (2020, June 02). Doctors see an early start to 'Trauma Season' this year. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.fox21news.com/digital-now/doctors-see-an-early-start-to-trauma-season-this-year/>

⁶ Muller, B. (2020, May 27). Doctors see 'dramatic increase' in children with ATV injuries. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.news4jax.com/news/local/2020/05/27/doctors-see-dramatic-increase-in-children-with-atv-injuries/>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Powell, E. (2020, May 28). Child ATV accidents on the rise, doctors think it's linked to coronavirus. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.firstcoastnews.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/child-atv-accidents-are-on-the-rise-doctors-think-its-linked-to-coronavirus/77-5968ef60-d6b9-423d-923a-337d64bc178f>

¹⁰ ATV-Related Injuries Involving Children Has Climbed Over The Years. (2020, June 2). Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.chalikhlaw.com/news/atv-related-injuries-involving-children-has-climbed-over-the-years/>

more kids are out of school and are now at home.”¹¹ “We are seeing an increase in accidental injuries, bike injuries, ATV injuries, and also accidental ingestions,”¹² stated Kristin Hinton Clinical Manager of Pediatric Emergency Department at Piedmont Columbus Regional Hospital.

Idaho

Idaho has had a noticeable increase in youth OHV accidents in Magic Valley which has prompted law enforcement to focus on OHV youth safety certification training.

In Boise County, following the investigation of three OHV rollover crashes in one weekend, the Sherriff’s Office noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed more people outdoors and urged safety when riding. Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation noted an increase in trail use, and a state OHV education coordinator commented, “Over the COVID-19 pandemic, almost every machine throughout the state has been sold off the shelf room floors so we’re getting more users in the backcountry.”

Kentucky

In September 2020, doctors in Kentucky described an increase in OHV accidents in Boyd County. “We had nine incidents out there this summer. Two involved dirt bikes and the rest involved ATVs. Unfortunately, two of those are alcohol-related incidents,” said Boyd County EMS Director Chuck Cremeans.¹³ Kentucky law requires helmet be worn by ATV operators at all times while in motion, though helmets are not required in “farming activities, mining activities, logging activities, or on private property.”¹⁴

“Kentucky doesn’t have a motorcycle helmet law, leaving many people to believe they don’t need to wear them while riding an ATV,” Cremeans said.¹⁵ “Especially with younger kids because the parents don’t believe the vehicle the child may be sized for will go as fast. Children often don’t wear a helmet, but when they wreck, they still tend to end up with head and neck injuries.”¹⁶ Cremeans supports ATV use, but only when used in a safe manner.

Louisiana

In Louisiana, doctors at the Emergency Medical Department for Lake Charles Memorial Hospital have reported that “since the stay-at-home order” there has been an “increase of children injured in ATV accidents, even at night.”¹⁷ Dr. Jon Gray, Emergency Medical Department Director for Lake Charles Memorial Director stated that, “We’ve had about a seventy-five percent increase in the

¹¹ Lyde, J. (2020, May 22). Piedmont Columbus Regional doctors see a rise in bicycle accidents amid COVID-19. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.wrbl.com/news/health/coronavirus/piedmont-columbus-regional-doctors-see-rise-in-bicycle-accidents-amid-covid-19/>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Keagy, K. (2020, September 28). Boyd County sees increase in ATV-related accidents; first responders urge caution. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from, <https://www.wsaz.com/2020/09/28/boyd-county-sees-increase-in-atv-related-accidents-first-responders-urge-caution/>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Kaur, R. (2020, May 15). ATV accidents in juveniles rising. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from <https://www.kplctv.com/2020/05/15/atv-accidents-juveniles-rising/>

past two months with ATV accidents, so a significant number.” “There has been about eighteen percent more pediatric admissions due to ATV trauma.”¹⁸

Minnesota

Six articles between May and October 2020 from Minnesota warned that OHV accidents had increased potentially due to lifestyle changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officers reported seeing a spike in OHV use, and an increase in fatalities. Anthony Bermel, a DNR conservation officer, stated: “There has absolutely been an increase in traffic this year... It seems people are looking for any excuse to be outdoors.”¹⁹

Dr. Paul Kosmatka, an orthopedic trauma surgeon at Essentia Health said, “Between 2010-19, Essentia averaged treating 18 patients from these crashes a year. In the first half of 2020 the hospital had already passed its yearly average.”²⁰

St. Luke’s in Duluth has also reported a similar rise in numbers, treating “nine patients injured in ATV crashes in the first half of 2020. In 2019, the hospital saw a total of 22 patients with ATV-related injuries.”²¹

OHV accidents specifically involving children are on the rise as well. Hennepin Healthcare in Minnesota reported an increase in OHV injuries in 2020. According to Dr. Stephen Smith, an emergency physician at, “We’ve seen at least six children under the age of 17 requiring hospital admission for ATV-related accidents since May . . . These injuries are preventable, and we want to remind parents to put safety first when allowing their kids to ride on or drive these fast-moving vehicles.” Dr. Smith believes the increase is pandemic related, “I suspect people have more time on their hands and are spending more time outdoors these days.”²²

While the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under 16 not operate an OHV, in Minnesota, it is allowed. “In Minnesota, ATV operators born after July 1, 1987 and OHM (off-highway motorcycle) riders under the age of 16 are required to complete an approved safety course before riding on public lands.”²³

In addition to an increase in fatalities, the number of OHV registrations has risen as well. “The total in 2019 was 329,275. ATVs are the most popular type, and so far this year there are nearly 24,000 new registrations.”²⁴

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Helmberger, M. (2020, May 13) COs face challenge from increased use of ATVs. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <http://timberjay.com/stories/cos-face-challenge-from-increased-use-of-atvs,16339>

²⁰ Erickson, A. (2020, July 26). Essentia and St. Louis County report uptick in ATV crashes, injuries. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://www.duluthnewtribune.com/news/accidents/6590125-Essentia-and-St.-Louis-County-report>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Hennepin Healthcare. (2020, October 1). Children injured in ATV accidents on the rise. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://hereforlife.blog/children-injured-in-atv-accidents-on-the-rise/>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Timberjay. (2020, September 23). Fatal OHV crashes reach decade high. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <http://www.timberjay.com/stories/fatal-ohv-crashes-reach-decade-high,16825>

Missouri

The commanding officer of Missouri State Highway Patrol, documented a rise in OHV fatalities, “The patrol says thus far in 2020, 13 people have been killed in traffic crashes in Troop B. Five of the fatalities involved motorcycles and five involved off-road vehicles such as ATVs and UTVs. During 2019 in Troop B, one person was killed in a motorcycle crash and three were killed in crashes involving an off-road vehicle.”²⁵

“From June 1 to July 22, 2020...Troop B investigated 10 crashes involving off-road style vehicles that resulted in an injury or death. Those ten crashes resulted in one fatality, four minor injuries, seven moderate injuries and four serious injuries. Eight of the injured people were juveniles. Thirteen of the victims were not using a safety device.”²⁶

North Dakota

North Dakota Highway Patrol’s Sgt. Wade Kadrmas reported six fatal OHV crashes in 2020, stating that “in 2019, compared to the same time-frame, we were at three. And, in 2018, we only had two fatality crashes.”²⁷ Kadrmas says the North Dakota Parks and Rec Department has been offering safety courses for younger drivers to take, so they can operate the vehicles safely. Kadrmas also urged riders to drive with caution and use all safety equipment available to them.

Tennessee

In Tennessee, the head doctor of Elvis Presley Trauma Center at Regional One, is raising awareness of “trauma season,” which is the period between Memorial Day Weekend and Labor Day during which emergency rooms and trauma centers are statistically the busiest. “Some of this is related to trauma season, which we just kind of consider the summer months. People are going to get outside more, you know, or they're on boats or on ATVs,” Dr. Fischer commented.²⁸

Texas

A trauma surgeon at University Health San Antonio commented in response to a surge in emergency room trauma patients, “Injury hasn’t changed throughout the pandemic, In fact, maybe it’s gotten worse.” On summer’s approach, he went on to say, “There [are] ATV crashes and motorcycle crashes and this time of year...we see a tremendous increase in the number of trauma victims.”

²⁵ KMMO. (2020, July 23). MSHP Troop B reports increase in fatal motorcycle and off-road vehicle fatalities. Retrieved on June 28, 2021, from <https://www.kmmo.com/2020/07/23/mshp-troop-b-reports-increase-in-fatal-motorcycle-and-off-road-vehicle-fatalities/>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Abrahamson, W. (2020, September 22). ATV fatalities up in North Dakota. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://www.newsdakota.com/2020/09/22/atv-fatalities-up-in-north-dakota/>

²⁸ Richard, B. (2020, July 12). Trauma season injuries, violence and coronavirus keeping hospitals busy. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://www.wmcactionnews5.com/2020/07/12/trauma-season-injuries-violence-coronavirus>

Utah

In Utah, the Intermountain hospitals have seen a “9% increase in trauma-related incidents this year compared to 2020, as people stop quarantining due to the COVID pandemic and are seeking to enjoy more outdoor activities.”²⁹

Vermont

The University of Vermont Medical Center Emergency Department has identified that the “ total number of people treated for ATV injuries through May 31 is 17 – up from six in 2019 and four in 2018. The number of pediatric cases has jumped to five – up from average of less than one for the last two years. Additionally, alcohol appears to be a factor in about half of the adult cases. For this time period, helmet usage was low among those admitted to the trauma service for ATV related injuries: 25 percent in 2018, 33 percent in 2019 and 29 percent in 2020.”³⁰ An injury prevention coordinator at the University of Vermont Medical Center, Abby Beerman, stated, that the “rise in ATV injuries this year is alarming. We are concerned that the numbers will continue to increase this summer unless our communities become aware of the issue and practice safe ridership.”³¹

West Virginia

In August 2020, a major increase in OHV-related incidents in West Virginia was documented. In West Virginia, Sergeant Jamie Wilhite with the Beckley Police Department, in response to rising ATV incidents stated, “Since 1982 there have been nearly 700 deaths relating to all-terrain-vehicles in West Virginia, and almost 100 of those deaths were between just 2015 and 2017.”³²

Sgt. Wilhite urged riders to follow the laws, drive only where you are allowed to, and keep basic precautions in mind. “Ride them where you’re allowed to ride them...If the ATV’s not equipped for passengers, don’t have a passenger on there. Headlights, tail lights, make sure you have all the functions working if you’re out after dark,” Sgt. Wilhite stated.³³ Riders are urged not to drive after dark, to avoid using main roads, and to always wear a helmet.

[The Consumer Federation of America](#) is an association of more than 250 nonprofit consumer organizations that was established in 1968 to advance the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education.

²⁹ Intermountain LiveWell. (2021, June 10). 5 ways you and your family can have a safe – and healthy – summer. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://www.ksl.com/article/50181438/5-ways-you-and-your-family-can-have>

³⁰ UVM Medical Center. (2020, June 23). As ATV injuries climb threefold so far this year, Vermonters are advised to follow safety precautions while riding. Retrieved June 30, 2020, from https://vtdigger.org/press_release/as-atv-injuries-climb-threefold-so-far-this-year-vermonters-are-advised-to-follow-safety-precautions-while-riding/

³¹ Ibid.

³² Comer, J. (2020, August 3). ATV-related incidents on the rise in southern West Virginia. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from <https://woay.com/atv-related-incident-on-the-rise-in-southern-west-virginia/>

³³ Ibid.