

**Town of Wilson, Wisconsin  
ATV/UTV On Road Use**

**August 25, 2025**

Dear Chairman Matthew Fore and Town Supervisors Nancy DesJardins, Stu Stempihar, Todd Richter, and Craig Stewart,

My name is Courtney Griffin, and I am the Director of Consumer Product Safety for the Consumer Federation of America. Founded in 1968, CFA is one of the nation's largest consumer organizations working in the consumer interest through research, advocacy, and education. CFA represents over 250 national, state, and local groups.

CFA leads a coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to reducing deaths and injuries caused by off-highway vehicles (OHVs). Our OHV Safety Coalition tracks news reports and compiles [OHV fatalities](#) in real time. The data from OHV fatalities demonstrates the serious risk of OHVs use on roadways.

It has come to our attention that a request was recently presented to the Town of Wilson Board to open public roads to ATVs and UTVs. Based on our historical data collection efforts and work in OHV-safety, we are providing some essential information for your consideration moving forward. OHV on-road use is linked with a significant increase in OHV fatalities. Even the ATV industry strongly opposes such use.

**A. Wisconsin OHV Fatalities**

Early this year, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources warned that fatal UTV/ATV crashes were rising.<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Public Radio explained how on-road use was increasing the frequency of crashes.<sup>2</sup>

In 2024, CFA recorded at least 40 OHV fatalities in Wisconsin. More than half—at least 28—of those fatalities occurred on-road. Two of the deaths in

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<sup>1</sup> Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, *DNR Urges UTV Riders To Buckle Up As Fatal Crashes Climb* (July 24, 2025), <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/111781>.

<sup>2</sup> Nick Rommel, *DNR Urges Safety After 23 Deaths This Year from ATV, UTV Crashes*, Wis. Pub. Radio (July 22, 2025), <https://www.wpr.org/news/dnr-urges-safety-23-deaths-atv-utv-crashes-2025>.



Wisconsin included children as young as 4 years old and 7 years old. In 2025, CFA has already recorded 26 OHV fatalities in Wisconsin. At least ten of those deaths occurred on-road, and at least one death was a child as young as 6 years old.

### **B. 2024 Fatality Data**

CFA and its OHV Safety Coalition recently released the data it collected regarding death and injury related to OHV use in 2024. The data is subject to change as more deaths are reported. In 2024, CFA tracked at least 632 OHV fatalities, an almost 27% increase from 2023. 17% of the deaths were children 15 years and younger. The youngest children were only three years old. A staggering 65% of the OHV deaths were during on-road use.

66% of all OHV deaths were related to all-terrain vehicles (ATV). Of deaths attributed to ATVs, 15% were children 15 years and young. 64% of the ATV deaths occurred with on-road use.

### **C. Even ATV Industry Associations Strongly Warning Against Public Road Use**

The Specialty Vehicle Institute of America (SVIA), which represents the manufacturers and distributors of ATVs, unequivocally opposes that use of ATVs on roads.<sup>3</sup> SVIA emphasizes that **ATVs are not designed, manufactured, or in any way intended for use on public streets, roads or highways and urges that on-highway use of ATVs be prohibited.** ATV use on highways, as some elected officials in your state have called for, is in direct conflict with manufacturers' intentions for ATVs proper use and is contrary to federal safety requirements.

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 2 for use on public roads and other motorists may not

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<sup>3</sup> Specialty Vehicle Inst. of Am., *Position in Opposition to On-Road Operation of ATVs*, <https://svia.org/opposition-to-on-road-use/>.



see you. ATVs are not designed to be used on paved surfaces because pavement may seriously affect handling and control.”<sup>4</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>5</sup>

### **C. More OHV Deaths Occur On Roadways than Off-Road**

Our coalition started collecting data to provide decision makers with a better sense of the dangers posed by OHVs. See our data and analysis on our OHV webpage [here](#). Last year’s data demonstrates the danger of OHV on-road use: 65% of all OHV deaths last year were associated with on-road use. This is consistent with previous years.

- **ATV Roadway Crashes:** Roadway crashes are more likely to involve multiple fatalities, 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, both things that are risk factors for ATV-related fatalities and injuries. From 1998-2007, roadway fatalities increased twice as fast as those off-road.<sup>6</sup> The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released ATV-related fatality statistics for public roads showing that there were 3,411 deaths from 2004-2013, with 323 in 2013 alone.<sup>7</sup>

### **D. OHV Design Contributes to Roadway Deaths and Injuries**

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<sup>4</sup> ATV Safety Inst., *Tips and Practice Guide for the All-Terrain Vehicle Rider*, [http://atvsafety.org/downloads/ATV\\_Riding\\_Tips.pdf](http://atvsafety.org/downloads/ATV_Riding_Tips.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Specialty Vehicle Inst. of Am., *Position in Opposition to On-Road Operation of ATVs*, <https://svia.org/opposition-to-on-road-use/>.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin., *Fatalities in Traffic Crashes Involving All-Terrain Vehicles*, <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/812193>.



Ultimately, OHVs are not safe on roads because they were not designed for roadway use.

- **OHVs<sup>8</sup> have a relatively narrow track and high center of gravity:** These design features allow for riding in wooded areas and between obstacles, and provide high ground clearance for rough terrain. However, these features put OHVs at a higher risk for rollovers,<sup>9</sup> and require “that the vehicle takes wider turns than are found in standard road design.”<sup>10</sup>
- **OHVs have low-pressure, deep tread tires designed for off-road use:** Automobile tires have relatively shallow tread and are designed to continually grip and release roadway surfaces. In contrast, OHV tires are made to grab off-road terrain and can act unpredictably on roadway surfaces, especially with increasing speed. The operator can easily lose control of the vehicle, potentially endangering the OHV rider, occupants of other vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.<sup>11</sup>
- **Most ATVs lack a rear differential:** Most ATVs have a solid rear axle or locked rear differential which means that both the inside and outside wheels rotate at the same speed, unlike motor vehicles designed for roadways. This often requires that the OHV “take wider turns than are found in standard road design,”<sup>12</sup> and makes it more difficult for OHVs to negotiate roadway curves, especially at the speeds often traveled on roads.

#### E. Children and OHVs Do Not Mix

Year after year, children continue to make up an alarming percentage of OHV fatalities.

Dr. Charles Jennissen, clinical professor at the University of Iowa, Carver College of Medicine has stated that “[m]ore kids in the US under 16 die from ATVs than bicycle crashes.”<sup>13</sup> Dr. Jennissen has further noted that “[w]e talk a

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<sup>8</sup> Garry M. Denning et al., *More Fatal All-Terrain Vehicle Crashes Occur on the Roadway Than Off: Increased Risk-Taking Characterizes Roadway Fatalities*, 19 *Injury Prevention* 250 (2013), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3717765/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Surge in Child ATV Injuries Coincides with COVID-19*, Mich. Farm News, Aug. 7, 2020.



lot about bicycle safety for kids, *but this is a bigger killer, and we need to protect our children.*"<sup>14</sup> Alarming, recent research from Dr. Jennissen shows that incidents are on the rise across the nation.<sup>15</sup> Public health officials have also documented an increase in OHV deaths and injuries, likely tied to school closures and stay-at-home orders. CFA has identified that 16 states are reporting increases in OHV deaths and injuries, through media reports.

#### **F. Additional Information and Conclusion**

The latest research about OHVs on roadways and OHV deaths and injuries, as well as a list of members of a national coalition formed to address this public health crisis and the advocacy efforts undertaken by this coalition are available [here](#).

We urge you to carefully consider any plans to allow OHV access on village, town, and city roads, keeping in mind the serious risk on-road use poses. If Deerfield moves forward with increasing OHV access on roads, we urge you to carefully consider the fatality data and ensure children are protected from serious injury and death by setting robust and enforceable age limits for OHV drivers and occupants.

We hope that you will consider these comments, and if we can be of any further assistance, please feel free to contact Courtney Griffin at Consumer Federation of America at [cgriffin@consumerfed.org](mailto:cgriffin@consumerfed.org) or (202) 567-7240.

Sincerely,

Courtney Griffin  
Director, Consumer Product  
Safety  
Consumer Federation of America

Charles Jennissen, MD  
Emergency Medicine University  
of Iowa

Iowa ATV Injury Prevention Task  
Force

Dr. Aitken. MD MPH  
Chair, Department of Pediatrics  
at McGovern Medical School  
The University of Texas Health  
Science Center at Houston

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<sup>14</sup> Id., emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> Id.



Katie Kearney  
Concerned Families for ATV  
safety Member  
Sean's Law  
Massachusetts Safety Advocate  
Physician-in-Chief,  
Children's Memorial Hermann  
Hospital

Carolyn Anderson  
Co-Founder  
Concerned Families for ATV  
Safety

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

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

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

Gerene Denning, PhD  
Emergency Medicine  
University of Iowa

Iowa ATV Injury Prevention Task  
Force

Gordon S. Smith, MD (MB.ChB,  
Otago)  
MPH Professor, Department of  
Epidemiology & Public Health  
University of Maryland School of  
Medicine Charles "McC" Mathias  
National Study Center for  
Trauma and EMSShock, Trauma  
and Anesthesiology Research –  
Organized Research Center

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

Serap Gorucu, PhD  
Department of Agricultural &  
Biological Engineering  
University of Florida