

Department of Labour
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Consultation on “Safe Use of ATVs on New Zealand Farms” Agricultural Guidelines

Safekids New Zealand is the national child injury prevention service of New Zealand established by Starship Children's Health Trauma Service to help reduce the high rate of unintentional injury to children.

On average, 3 children die and 52 others aged 0-14 years old are being injured by All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) each year in New Zealand.

Research:

When riding on an ATV children are particularly vulnerable to injury because it requires the rider to use 'active riding techniques'. Children do not have the body size, weight, perception and co-ordination skills to actively ride ATVs safely. (Safekids NZ Factsheet: ATVs, 2002). In addition, ATVs are powerful machines with a high centre of gravity. The required mode of riding presents a challenge to adult riders. For small bodies the challenges are even greater. (Campbell, M et al. April 2009)

Overseas data show that children are more likely to be killed and injured than adults riding ATVs and are also likely to be more severely injured. A United States study of 512 children suffering from injuries related to all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use found that head and extremity injuries are the two most common injuries in children suffering ATV injuries and are associated with long-term disability. ATV use by children is dangerous and is a significant threat to child safety (Shah, C et al. July 2009). With ATVs becoming larger and more readily available, the number of children and adults being injured or killed in the US continues to rise.

Similar research conducted in New Zealand also concluded that ATVs are potentially lethal and have the capacity to inflict significant harm. Between 2000 and 2006 the research identified 218 confirmed cases of injuries sustained while riding an ATV. Of that, almost three out of five (58%) injured were children aged 12 years and under. (Anson, K et al. September, 2009).

Data:

New ATV claims administered through the ACC scheme from July 2001 to June 2006 saw the number of accidents involving children, under the age recommended by the Guidelines, increase 10-fold during this period. Alarming, the greatest percentage increase occurred in the 5-9 year age groups at 49%. Between 2006 and 2008, 300 children were injured in ATV accidents in New Zealand.

Table 1 New ATV Claims (Medical Fee Claims) for Claimants 19 Years and Younger, by Year

Age	July 2001 -- June 2002	July 2002 -- June 2003	July 2003 -- June 2004	July 2004 -- June 2005	July 2005 -- June 2006
0-4	5	7	24	26	33
5-9	4	16	46	49	73
10-14	10	11	58	83	95
Subtotal	19	34	104	158	201
15-19	52	39	66	110	150
Total	71	73	194	268	351

(Campbell, M et al. April 2009)

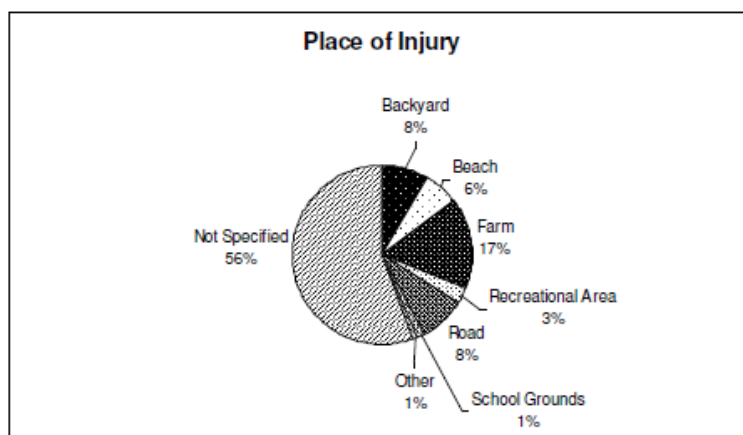
Recommendations:

Safekids New Zealand supports the government’s decision to review the publication ‘Safe Use of ATVs on New Zealand Farms: Agricultural Guideline’ and would like to put forward the following recommendations:

- **Recommend legislation to prohibit children under the age of 16 from operating an ATV.** For ‘best practice’, overseas studies have shown that people under the age of 16 should not be permitted to operate an All Terrain Vehicle (ATV), Quad Bikes etc. In general, manufacturers also recommend that ATVs should not be used by people under the age of 16 and display prominent warning labels on all new ATVs sold in New Zealand.

Drivers under 16 years old are 2.5 times more likely to be injured on ATVs than drivers 16–34 and 4.5 times more likely to be injured than drivers aged 35–54. Thirty percent of deaths associated with ATV injuries occurred to those under 16 years old. (Anson, K et al. September, 2009)

- **Recommend that the coverage of the ‘Guidelines’ is extended to all ATV use in New Zealand, and not be restricted to farms, forestry and the adventure tourism sectors.** Research shows that ATV injuries sustained by children occur in many other places other than farms.



ATV=All Terrain Vehicle.

(Anson, K et al. September, 2009)

- **Recommend that the ‘Guidelines’ emphasis that riders always wear a helmet when riding an ATV given the high rate of head and facial injuries.** Approved standard helmets are designed to be effective for crashes where riders fall off bikes, run into obstacles or into each other. Statistics show that a properly worn helmet reduces the risk of head injury by 85%, of brain injury by 88%, of severe brain injury by at least 75%, and of facial injury by 65% (Safekids NZ Factsheet: ‘Child Cyclist Injury’, July 2007)
- **Recommend that there be mandatory safety training and ongoing education for all those operating ATVs.**

Conclusion:

It is clear that it is not appropriate for a young child to ride an adult sized ATV due to the risk of serious injury and death. The number of children in New Zealand who have died or sustained an injury while riding an ATV is considerably high.

The current 'Guidelines' have largely been ignored and have not been able to prevent nor reduce the number of child ATV injuries. The existence of a law generally acts as a deterrent in the first instance and allows for appropriate processes and sanctions when this is not the case.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the consultation on "Safe Use of ATVs on New Zealand Farms" Agricultural Guidelines. Safekids New Zealand is prepared to provide further information or support if required, please contact us.

Yours faithfully,



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Safekids New Zealand's mission is to reduce the incidence and severity of unintentional injuries to New Zealand children aged 0 -14 years