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## ATV Riding Tips for Safe Summer Fun

The weekend signals the start of outdoor fun for many people and a time for enjoyable activities such as riding ATVs (all-terrain vehicles). Unfortunately, national statistics indicate that ATV safety is often taken lightly. According to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 125,500 people have been seriously injured in ATV-associated accidents since 1982, and more than 5,700 people have been killed. Children are at the highest risk, with the under-16 age group accounting for more than 31% of injuries in 2003.

Regina Kuhn, OSU Extension 4-H Youth Development Educator in Scioto County states that “In an effort to educate our area youth and their families on how they can enjoy their ATV in a fun and safe manner we are now offering ATV training and educational materials in conjunction with our local 4-H programming.” To facilitate this effort, Kuhn recently received one of 22 National 4-H Council Community Safety Grants sponsored by the American Honda Motor Company, Inc., the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America and the National 4-H Council.

As part of this programming, area teens 14 and older can register to attend the Honda ATV Safety Institute in Troy, Ohio and become youth advocates for ATV safety by participating in area safety events and activities. Adults can also become involved by attending ATV trainings, incorporating ATV safety handouts and exhibits into community events and activities, and/or starting their own 4-H ATV Club.

Grant monies and programming efforts will be matched locally and supported through the OSU Extension Scioto County 4-H Program and the Portsmouth City Health Department. Sheriff Marty Donini, the Scioto County Commissioners and Dr. Terry Johnson of the Scioto County Corner’s Office have also expressed their support of this important educational program.

The 4-H Community ATV Safety Program recommends these tips for ATV safety:

- ✓ SELECT the right model ATV. Make sure it is right for age, size, strength and skill level. Kids under age 16 years should not be riding ATVs with engine size over 90cc and under age 12 should not be riding an ATV with an engine size 70cc or greater.
- ✓ PROTECT your body. At a minimum, always wear a helmet, face shield or goggles, long sleeved shirt, gloves, long pants and leather boots. The helmet should be designed for motorcycle use, properly fitted and comply with current US Department of Transportation safety standards.
- ✓ RESPECT yourself, proper use of roads and trails, other people and laws. The top risk factors involving ATV accidents include riding double and riding on pavement. Never carry a passenger or hitch a ride. Ride only on designated trails, never on or alongside paved roads. Be courteous to hikers, bikers, cars and other ATV operators. Supervise children riding ATVs at all times. Learn and follow your state's ATV operation laws and read the manufacturer's warning label on every machine.
- ✓ INSPECT your vehicle. Maintain recommended tire pressure, make sure your brakes are adjusted correctly, check that fuel and oil levels are sufficient, ensure that all connections and cables are secure and test your headlights and taillights.
- ✓ PERFECT your skills. Learn proper handling of your ATV by reading the safety manual that came with your ATV when it was purchased new and taking an approved safety course from a certified instructor.

The 4-H Community ATV Safety Program brings together youth and adults at local workshops to learn proper gear, rules and riding techniques. For more information, visit the National 4-H website at [www.atv-youth.org](http://www.atv-youth.org).

For local 4-H ATV programming information, please contact Regina Kuhn at OSU Extension, Scioto County (740)354-7879 or <http://scioto.osu.edu> . The Extension Office is located in room 7 of the Court House and is open Monday-Friday 8:00 am - 4:30 pm.

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. To become part of the 4-H adventure, check out [www.4husa.org](http://www.4husa.org).

The Ohio State University, The United States Department of Agriculture, and Scioto County Commissioners Cooperating.

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