

Press Release

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CENTER FOR INJURY RESEARCH AND POLICY CALLS FOR SWIFT GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO ESCALATING ATV SAFETY CRISIS

Coalition Releases New Analysis of ATV Hazards which Details the Failure of the Current Voluntary Approach to Safety

Columbus, OH – The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of the Columbus Children’s Research Institute at Children’s Hospital, joins the Consumer Federation of America, the Natural Trails and Waters Coalition, and others in a renewed call to action to stop the epidemic of injuries and deaths to children due to all-terrain vehicles (ATVs). A report was released August 20 of a new analysis of government data which shows that ATVs continue to needlessly kill and injure America’s children. The report also challenges the ATV industry’s recent suggestions concerning children’s use of ATVs made for adults.

Released at a press conference in Washington, D.C., the report entitled “All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety Crisis: America’s Children *STILL* at Risk,” provides documentation that the ATV industry’s voluntary approach to safety is failing to protect consumers, especially children. The coalition, which formed last year to petition the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) on this issue, urges the CPSC and states to act immediately to reduce future deaths and injuries and calls for specific national safety standards to protect children.

“The voluntary approach, which relies on age recommendations, warning labels and offers of training, simply is not working,” says Dr. Gary Smith, Director of the Center for Injury Research and Policy. “Children younger than 16 years continue to be injured almost exclusively by adult-size ATV’s, which the industry says it does not sell for their use.”

Nearly 15 years after the industry agreed to improve safety, ATV-related incidents, especially those involving children, continue to rise. Just last month, a 10-year-old boy from Coshocton County, Ohio was killed when his ATV rolled over on private farmland.

New analysis of government data reveals the following with regard to the voluntary safety approach.

- Only 7% of all ATV riders receive formal safety training from a dealer, salesperson or organized program.
- More than 40% of injured ATV drivers report that their ATV does not have warning labels or they do not know if it does.
- Even when drivers are aware of the labels, 87% did not know about age recommendations for children 12 years and younger, and 62% were unaware of age recommendations for children 16 years and younger.

At a CPSC public hearing in West Virginia in June, industry officials, dealers, and state ATV associations made clear that they oppose setting age limits on the use of adult-sized ATVs. The industry proposes “fitting” children ages 12 to 15 to ATVs. The industry’s position is that if children can reach the handle bars and foot pegs, they can safely operate bigger, more powerful ATVs designed for adult-use. This position ignores the fact that safe operation of ATVs requires much more than long legs and arms.

“Children younger than 16 years do not possess the necessary levels of judgment, strength, coordination, and maturity to safely maneuver and control these powerful machines,” says Dr. Smith. “We have training, licensing, and minimum age requirements for the operation of automobiles, yet in most states there are no comparable

requirements for the operation of an ATV. We urge the CPSC and states to act immediately to prevent avoidable death and injury to children.”

One year ago, this coalition announced a petition to the CPSC to issue a regulation banning the sale of adult-size ATVs for use by children 16 years and younger. Today, coalition members urge the CPSC to grant the petition and issue a rule. A rule from the CPSC would establish a nationwide minimum standard, provide real penalties for dealers who fail to comply, and send a clear, powerful message to parents that adult-sized ATVs are inappropriate for children younger than 16 years. The coalition also encourages states to regulate ATVs like automobiles, by establishing minimum age standards, and requiring formal training, licensure, and helmet use.

All-terrain vehicles, commonly known as ATVs, have been on the market for over 30 years. Production of three-wheel ATVs was halted in 1988 as the annual number of injuries soared above 100,000. They were replaced with four-wheel ATVs that were intended to be safer. However, the risk of injury to riders on four-wheel ATVs is currently nearly as great as when three-wheel ATVs were banned in 1988. Indeed, injuries on four-wheel machines continue to escalate, particularly among the pediatric population.

- The CPSC estimates that 14% of ATV riders are children younger than 16 years. However, these children disproportionately account for 37% of all injuries and 38% of deaths.
- Between 1982 and 2001, 1,714 children younger than 16 years, including 779 younger than 12 years, died in ATV-related events.
- From 1997-2001, ATV-related injuries requiring emergency department treatment doubled to nearly 112,000.
- ATV operators younger than 16 years are 4.5 times more likely than 35-50 year old operators to require emergency treatment for an ATV-related injury.

The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) of the Columbus Children’s Research Institute at Children’s Hospital, Columbus, Ohio, works at the local, state, national, and international levels to reduce death and disability due to injuries through research, education, advocacy, and advances in clinical care. CIRP aims to improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, prevention, treatment, and biomechanics of injuries. CIRP focuses on injury research as the cornerstone for successful injury control, because scientific evidence will best direct educational efforts, identify opportunities for safer product design and environmental modification, allow evaluation of clinical care, and provide the rationale for responsible public policy. CIRP educates health and other professionals, policy makers, and the public regarding injury research and prevention. CIRP provides leadership in the development, implementation, and scientific evaluation of public policy regarding control of injuries.

More information can be found at CIRP’s website: <http://www.injurycenter.org>.