



SAFETY ALERT

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY

December 2011

QUAD BIKES

This alert reminds the farming community of the serious safety risks with the use of quad bikes.

Background

Quad bikes are an important and popular piece of equipment on a farm. They are used for weed control, mustering, property inspections and maintenance work.

There have been numerous reported incidents across Australia where people have been killed or seriously injured while operating quad bikes on farms. Sixteen people have been killed so far this year from quad bike incidents. Recent examples include:

- A 79-year-old farmer died whilst weed spraying on their property using a quad bike fitted with a spray tank. Whilst traversing a slope the quad bike rolled and pinned the farmer underneath. The farmer was not wearing a helmet and also sustained head injuries. The farmer was found a day or so later after a neighbour could not make contact.
- A 65-year-old farmer who was using a quad bike to spread seed on a property was found deceased by neighbours concerned at being unable to contact him. The quad bike had rolled down a creek embankment.
- An 11 year old was moving cattle on a farm when the quad bike rolled. The rider was not wearing a helmet and later died.
- A 50-year-old farmer died after falling off a quad bike while spraying bushland.
- A farmer in their 60s was injured, while mustering, after crashing into a tree and flipping the quad bike.

A recent court judgement highlighted the need to wear helmets when riding quad bikes. A young farmhand died when the quad bike, travelling at an estimated 35kph to 46kph, overturned resulting in serious head injuries. No helmet was worn.

The court found that if the rider was wearing an AS/NZS 1698 helmet and the quad bike was fitted with a device to prevent crush injuries in the event to a rollover it is likely the injuries would have been significantly reduced.

Contributing factors

- No helmet: helmets prevent or reduce head injuries.
- Attachments or carrying heavy loads: may reduce the stability of the quad bike.
- Working alone: no assistance available to assist if trapped and death may result from otherwise treatable injuries.
- Underage use of adult size quad bikes: cannot correctly control the bike.

Actions required

Work health and safety laws, requires employers and those who control workplaces to take all necessary steps to ensure plant such as quad bikes is maintained in a safe condition that safe systems of work are established and maintained and that all workers have adequate information, training and supervision.

Only use quad bikes for tasks that they are designed for. Ensure that riders:

- wear a helmet
- are competent in the safe use of the quad bikes (including attachments)
- who are inexperienced are supervised until competent

Chair: John Watson (WorkCover NSW)

Secretariat: C/- WorkCover NSW, Locked Bag 2906, LISAROW NSW 2250

Email: HWSA.Secretariat@workcover.nsw.gov.au



- under 16 years of age do not ride adult-sized quad bikes

Risk controls

Before purchasing or operating a quad bike, consider the following risk controls:

1. Select the correct vehicle for your farm

Before purchasing a quad bike, consider selecting the safest vehicle for the range of intended jobs and conditions on your farm. Before you buy, talk to your vehicle dealer about your own farming situation and read the vehicle manufacturer's recommendations to ensure the vehicle is suitable for your farm terrain, the tasks you will use it for and the physical ability of the people who will use it.

2. Training

Attend rider training. Each person using a quad bike should be competent to use it safely. Ask your vehicle dealer about certified rider training organisations.

3. Helmets and personal protective equipment (PPE)

Wear a helmet that complies with Australian New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1698. As well as a helmet, wear appropriate PPE such as eye protection, hand protection, long-sleeve shirt, full-length pants and sturdy footwear.

4. After market attachments

Before purchasing attachments, talk to your vehicle dealer to see if they are suitable for your quad bike. Attachments often reduce the stability, operator control and performance of the vehicle.

5. Safe use on the farm

Ensure that the quad bike is used within the manufacturer's guidelines; in relation to passenger-carrying, load requirements and rider age – ie use of adult-sized quad bikes by people aged under 16 is not recommended by manufacturers. If you do not have the manual or other instructional material, contact the manufacturer or vehicle dealer to obtain them.

6. Operator protective devices

Farmers should consider the option to fit commercially manufactured and tested devices to reduce the likelihood of the rider being trapped under the quad bike in the event of a rollover.

7. Maintenance

Quad bikes should be maintained in a safe condition. Pre-start checks carried out each day – eg check brakes, steering, tyres, levers, bars and racks. Any defects need to be repaired.

8. Working alone

Farmers often work in isolated areas and or on their own, tell someone where you are working, when you plan to return, and have a system where regular communication checks are made on people who are working in isolation.

Further information

- [Farm vehicle pre-purchase checklist – choosing the right vehicle for the job](#)
- [Quad bike safety – what you need to know](#)
- [Quad Bike handbook](#)
- Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 1698 Protective helmets for vehicle users
- Contact your work health and safety regulator

Disclaimer

This publication may contain occupational health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations administered by that work health and safety regulators. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice.

You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.