

terrain vehicles

As with other vehicles, even a minor error in the driver's judgement can have serious, and sometimes fatal, consequences. But an ATV driver must make many, sometimes split-second decisions as he or she goes over rough and unfamiliar land, choosing routes and avoiding obstacles that no driver would ever encounter on a road. This level of concentration is hard enough for adults, let alone children. Parents who are considering getting an ATV for their child should be aware that the vehicle is often unforgiving and that a single error may result in permanent injury or death.

During 1984 in Ontario, all seven ATV fatalities happened on public roads. Except where an ATV is recognized as a farm vehicle, it is only allowed to cross (and for that you need the proper vehicle registration and operator's licence), not drive along, public roads.

The law makes ATV drivers responsible for his or her own safety and the well-being of children driving ATVs rests largely on the judgement of their parents. There is legislation in Ontario governing the use of ATVs off the owner's property. No drivers under 12 years of age are allowed to drive the

vehicle on property other than their own.

How safe or appropriate an ATV will be for you depends very much on what you expect from it, the kind of land you plan to run it on, and those who will be using it. If you are considering the purchase of an ATV, you should be aware of all the risks and their consequences.

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Community safety conference

I was one of 100 participants at the Community Highway Safety Conference, held in Toronto in February. Other participants, like myself, were representing organizations from across Ontario, while police, nurses, doctors and government employees were also there.

Tom Smith, the provincial coordinator for highway safety was the chairman of the meeting. The purpose of the conference was to involve and educate community people to make driving, riding and walking safer, by addressing specific issues.

A panel of four people addressed the topic "The Impact of Traffic Accidents on the Community and What Some People Are Doing About It". John Bates from People to Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere (PRIDE) and Helen Collum, who lost two teenagers, one through cancer and one killed by a drunk driver, spoke on drunk driving — one of our most serious social problems. PRIDE has advocated more police checks; breathalizers in every police car; lowering the legal alcohol rate to .05 rather than .08; changing legal driving

Luella Lewis



age back to 21; and some form of graduated licensing with different levels of training. With almost 3,000 killed yearly, there is a need for tougher laws and also more community support financially and physically for victims and/or bereaved families.

Barbara Bisgrove, safety officer for the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, spoke on buckling up and doing it properly. She said 30 per cent of drivers and passengers in Ontario do not wear seat belts and in 1986, 65 per cent of traffic accident victims were not wearing seat belts. There should be more enforcement of wearing seat belts, starting with police and the many new parents in Ontario incorrectly using infant car seats. Ms. Bisgrove suggested immigrants, low income people and people with low IQs should be taught about using seat belts correctly.

Dr. Robert McMurtry of the trauma unit of Sunnybrook Medical Centre, stressed the importance of getting accident victims to help quickly. The use of qualified ambulance attendants, paramedics, and air lift services in remote areas reduces the mortality rate and the length of hospital stays, he said. The trauma unit at Sunnybrook uses up to 33 skilled people in the first hour of treatment of an accident victim. The introduction of high school students to accident victims is a new program at Sunnybrook to help promote awareness.

At the conference it was stressed that we should all be safety-minded and try for higher standards of training and testing, less risk taking, more legislation and enforcement with tougher consequences. The safe rules of conduct start in the community and in the homes of our nation. The three rules for raising children are, EXAMPLE, EXAMPLE, EXAMPLE.

Luella Lewis is the Federated Women's Institutes of Ontario Board Director and represented Women's Institutes at the Community Highway Safety Conference.