



Australian Government

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MANAGING QUAD BIKES IN THE WORKPLACE

This information sheet provides an overview for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) and workers of the considerations necessary when using quad bikes in the workplace and some approaches that may be applied to reduce the associated risks.

The content contained in this information sheet is a modified extract from the Managing Risks of Plant in Rural Workplaces Code of Practice to reflect application within the Commonwealth jurisdiction.

QUAD BIKES—WHAT ARE THEY?

Quad bikes are four-wheeled bikes commonly used on farms. They are also known as 'all terrain vehicles' (ATVs). However, they are not safe for use in all terrains.

Quad bikes are a major cause of death and serious injuries each year with most incidents caused by sideways and backward rollovers.

IS A QUAD BIKE A SUITABLE VEHICLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS?

Before purchasing a quad bike, a PCBU should undertake the following steps:

- > identify business needs and relevant rider safety issues
- > compare vehicle options based on task requirements
- > undertake consultation with affected workers
- > agree and endorse risk mitigation strategies at officer level.

IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS AND RIDER SAFETY ISSUES

Before contacting suppliers, make a list of your business needs. Questions to ask include:

Tasks	What tasks will it be used for? What do you need it to do?
Conditions	What are the most common operating conditions? Rocky or hilly country? Mud? Sand?
Choosing a vehicle	Which vehicle provides the rider with the greatest level of safety for each task?
Operator	Who will be operating the vehicle? What training do they have, or will they need? What age and size are they? Check the manufacturers' instructions for safe operating measures. Do I have the necessary skills and expertise to train the operators or will I need to seek external trainers?
Protective equipment	What protective equipment will I need to provide? Helmets? Gloves?
Road use	Will the vehicle use sealed and/or public roads? Will I need conditional registration?
Loads	What will be carried and how much will it weigh?
Towing	Will the vehicle be used to tow trailers or other attachments? If so, what is the likely maximum weight and height the vehicle will be expected to tow?

COMPARE VEHICLE OPTIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS

Quad bikes are an economical single person vehicle for off-road use. However a quad bike is often not a suitable choice for Commonwealth workplaces; especially those with utility needs, or where the normal work involves travel on paved surfaces.

Officers of PCBUs are expected to consider other vehicle options if business needs are constrained by the limitations of a quad bike. Small on-road vehicles, two-wheel motorcycles or light utility (side-by-side) vehicles may be a better choice for many tasks. The carrying capacity of any quad bike will be reduced by the weight of the rider, the weight of any attachments and the load to be carried in those attachments.

SELECTING A QUAD BIKE

There are many factors and features to consider when choosing a quad bike. Sports models should not be procured in the Commonwealth jurisdiction; agricultural or 'workhorse' models are more appropriate.

Major considerations include:

- > intended use of the quad bike
- > size of property
- > age of rider
- > terrain conditions
- > engine size
- > gear ratio
- > suspension
- > centre of gravity
- > drive mechanism
- > suitability of available attachments and accessories
- > brakes
- > seat carrying capacity
- > if transmission braking is available
- > if reverse gear is available
- > if an operator protective device is available.

When assessing the risks involved with the use of a quad bike you should consider the vehicle's:

- > centre of gravity—usually high
- > track width—usually narrow
- > wheelbase—usually short
- > length of travel suspension—usually long
- > tyre pressure—usually low.

All these features can contribute to instability and should be considered for the terrain to be driven on, speed of operation, mechanical condition of the quad bike and rider skill. Additionally, unrestrained tools or implements can be ejected with some force and cause injury to the rider so they may lose control.

Quad bikes may pose an increased risk to the user over and above those known to exist for tractors, four-wheel drive vehicles and two-wheeled motorcycles.

The unique design characteristics of quad bikes may prevent fitting traditional rollover protective devices that incorporate seatbelts, such as ROPs on a tractor or a cabin on a four-wheel drive utility.

However, crush protection devices are available that may assist to protect the rider in the event of a rollover. As research is continuing into the effectiveness of these devices they are not mandatory at present. Regardless of whether a PCBU chooses to fit an operator protective device, it must manage the risks of vehicle rollover occurring through a combination of vehicle selection, instruction and training, and safe use of attachments.

Risks from the following situations should also be assessed:

- > rider struck by an object, for example, an overhanging branch
- > rollover from striking an object or the terrain being too steep
- > leg of rider being caught in rear tyre, chain or foot rest
- > loads too heavy, unequally distributed or not secured properly
- > rider inexperience with the effects of slope, speed or weight distribution
- > fatigue
- > poor maintenance of brakes and suspension
- > mustering livestock.

QUAD BIKE RIDER TRAINING

Training quad bike riders will help them understand the risks and safe use of the quad bike and attached equipment. Rider training can be workplace or task specific or more general and be provided by a manufacturer or industry training provider. A combination of general and job specific training will help enable riders to operate a quad bike competently and safely.

It is important riders are provided with, understand and implement the operating instructions of the quad bike's manufacturer.

Other control measures should include:

- > always wearing a properly fitting helmet which meets an appropriate standard
- > not allowing passengers on the quad bike
- > not allowing any child under the age of 16 to ride a quad bike
- > not allowing anybody to operate a quad bike who has not had adequate training and instruction
- > ensuring all guards are in place, particularly foot plates
- > providing the rider with an effective communication system when carrying out work in a remote or isolated location.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

A helmet which meets an appropriate standard should always be worn when operating a quad bike. Other PPE like face shields, goggles, boots or shoes, gloves and appropriate clothing should also be worn. In open terrain operation or in continuous low speed operation, less protective or alternate clothing may be chosen after a risk assessment has been conducted. Be aware of solar radiation and risk of dehydration when selecting PPE.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Comcare:

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