



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

NEWS

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FWP Reminds Riders that OHVs are Designed for Trails, Not Pavement

HELENA - The weather may not be a good indicator, but the unofficial summer season kicked off this Memorial Day weekend. Summer also means a rise in ATV and general off-highway vehicle (OHV) use. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) reminds all OHV users that off-highway vehicles are designed for trails and dirt roads, not city streets and highways.

“ATVs are bigger, faster, and heavier than ever, and the chances of serious injury and death increase when they are used improperly,” said Jason White, FWP Motorized Trails Specialist.

In Montana, OHV registrations increased from 23,000 in 2001 to 59,000 in 2008. “Some of this increase is may be based on the new way registrations are handled in Montana, but it demonstrates a significant rise in OHVs,” said White.

Russ Ehnes, President of the Montana Trail Vehicle Riders Association (MTVRA), stresses the importance of educating OHV users. “As the number of off-highway vehicles in Montana grows, so does the need for education about OHV safety,” Ehnes said. “The manufacturers, themselves, will tell you these vehicles were not designed to be operated on streets and highways. They are not safe when used at high speeds on asphalt surfaces.”

Montana law allows OHVs to be used on paved roads, but Ehnes warns, “Caution must always be exercised whenever these vehicles are used for purposes not intended by the manufacturer. The OHV makers did not build ATVs to be used on streets and highways.”

Although data on traffic accidents is not set up to easily distinguish whether an OHV accident occurred on a trail, a municipal street, or a highway, the Montana Highway Patrol estimates that there were 26 OHV crashes on streets and highways in 2009. Those crashes led to 25 injuries, 20 of which were serious, and one death. The most recent fatalities occurred this past Memorial Day weekend when two teenagers were killed riding an ATV on County Road 245 near Fallon, Montana.

All OHV users are urged to ride responsibly.

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