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Quad bike safety: know how to ride and survive

With quad bikes the leading cause of fatalities on Australian farms, SafeWork SA is reminding people about the risks they pose to riders' safety, especially children, as school holidays have begun.

SafeWork SA Executive Director Ms Marie Boland said that each year in Australia (2011-16) about 15 to 20 people are killed using a quad bike and a further 8000 people are admitted to hospital (2003-2011) for injuries related to using a quad bike. Young people aged between 10 and 24 are at greater risk of injury.

"The majority of quad bike deaths and injuries arise from sideways, backward and forward rollovers – including at slow speed – that trap and/or crush the rider underneath the vehicle," she said.

The most common cause of death is when the rider is trapped and unable to breathe under the weight of an overturned quad bike, which can weigh up to 400kg.

Other contributing factors include a lack of rider training and experience, unsafe riding practices like excessive speed, riding on steep, uneven or unfamiliar ground, carrying a passenger or an unbalanced load, inappropriate attachments and the rider not wearing suitable protective equipment.

On most farms work continues all year, including through the school holidays.

"It is important that people who use quad bikes remain vigilant to the risks and hazards, especially during the school holidays as children and quad bikes don't mix," Ms Boland said.

Any person conducting a business or undertaking has legal responsibilities to protect people from the safety risks posed by items of plant and equipment. This is particularly important in the agriculture industry, where farms are often a workplace as well as a family residence.

SafeWork SA offers the following safety tips:

- Assess whether a quad bike is the best and safest vehicle for the activity, considering the task and environmental factors. They are not suitable for rocky or steep terrain.
- Ensure all riders are trained and competent in the safe use of the quad bike before they ride one, including its capabilities and limitations.
- Consider quad bikes that have a crush protection device (CPD) fitted by the manufacturer, or, for existing quad bikes, have one retro-fitted by a competent person.
- Owners and riders should follow the manufacturer's recommendations for using the bike and any attachments: only use attachments that are compatible with the bike.
- Ride to the conditions, considering terrain, visibility and prevailing weather conditions.
- Never allow children under 16 to operate an adult-sized quad bike. Their body weight, strength and skill are not sufficient to safely control adult-sized bikes.

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- Riders should always wear an approved helmet,
- Never conduct stunts, jumps or wheelies on a quad bike.

SafeWork SA offers a free workplace advisory service to anyone who needs help to identify hazards and risks and put in place practical safety systems to suit site-specific circumstances.

SafeWork SA's WHS advisors have no inspector powers so farmers can feel comfortable requesting help. Book a visit online at safework.sa.gov.au/freeadvice or call 1300 365 255.

For more tips on [quad bike safety](#) or to download a free copy of the [Farmers' Guidebook to Work Health and Safety](#), produced with Primary Producers SA visit the SafeWork SA website, safework.sa.gov.au.

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