



SAFETY ALERT & BULLETIN OF THE MONTH

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Safely Loading, Unloading and Transporting ATVs

AOM: 2023-07-10

Every year forestry workers are seriously injured while operating ATVs. Incidents caused by improperly loading or unloading of ATVs can be just as serious as ATV crashes and rollovers. Consider these tips and set yourself up for safe and successful field days.

While this alert is focused on All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) or “quads”, it is equally applicable to all off-road vehicles (ORVs) which includes side-by-side type utility vehicles (UTVs).

Choosing the Right Equipment:

- Choose a low deck height. A flat deck on a pickup is lower than an over-the-box deck, minimizing your falling distance or your ATV's if something goes wrong. A good choice to consider is a purpose-built trailer. Look for one with a *between-the-wheels* deck that provides a lower center of gravity.
- Consider “drive-on / drive-off” configurations. Ramps that attach to either side of the deck (or front and rear) can alleviate the need to reverse down ramps. This is a better option as it capitalizes on a rider's forward-looking visibility and balance control.
- Consider built-in / folding ramps to avoid the risks associated with improperly aligned or insecure two-piece ramps.
- Use a ramp system that locks onto the tailgate or deck. Use ratchet-type tie-downs to secure ramp(s) to the bumper or trailer hitch during loading / unloading.
- Front “kick stops” prevent ramps from moving forward and side rails help ensure ATV tires won't slip off.
- Longer ramps reduce ramp incline so there is less need to “take a run” at the ramp.





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Selecting a Loading / Unloading Site:

- Find a site that gives you room to operate with no traffic or obstacles and a level surface with firm ground.
- Use topography to your advantage. A small hill or backing into a shallow ditch will lower the rear pickup wheels, reducing the ramp incline angle.
- If you must load / unload beside an active road, find a location with good visibility along a straight section, so other drivers can see you clearly and slow down. Use your radio to let others know you are there and when you finish.

Loading and Unloading:

- Apply the proper techniques: don't load in a rush, double-check the ramps are secure, take a balanced stance on the machine, use 4-wheel drive and low range, apply the throttle gently and cover the brakes as you enter and leave the deck.
- Wear a helmet when loading and unloading. Use suitable footwear (do not wear caulk boots as they provide no traction on a metal deck), gloves and eyewear. Use 3-point contact climbing on or off the deck.
- Do not load or unload from a trailer that is not attached to the towing vehicle. The trailer can suddenly tip up possibly causing a loss of control.
- If using an UTV, wear your seatbelt. You want to be inside the machine in the event of a rollover.

Securing Your Load:

- Use quality tie-downs to secure your ATV and attach them to sturdy locations on the machine (axles, front or back metal carrying frames) and purpose-built D-rings on trailer or truck box. Always carry a spare pair of tie-downs.
- Tug on the machine to confirm it is unable to move forward or backward, or side to side.
- Place the ramps back into their storage location; tie them down.
- Travel a few miles, pull over to a safe location and tug the machine again. Re-tighten the tie-downs if necessary. During the trip, periodically check to confirm the tie-downs remain tight.
- Ensure safety equipment/PPE is stored and secured.





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Additional Resources:

- [Video](#) – ATV Loading
- [Safety Alert](#) – Serious ATV Roll Over
- [ATV Safety Institute](#) (US) – gear tips, riding techniques and skill development exercises
- [WorkSafeBC – ATV / UTV Checklist](#) – regulatory requirements for workplace ATV use

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BCFSC Bulletin - News and Updates

BCFSC Latest News & Resources

[Operator Safety Training Fact Sheet](#) – The Wood Pellets Association of Canada (WPAC) and BCFSC have launched an industry-wide initiative that delivers a comprehensive digital e-learning safety training program for plant operators and supervisors across companies. Learn more by reading the Fact Sheet.

[June Forest Safety News](#) – summer edition

BCFSC Training:

Upcoming Classroom Training

September 21 - 22 | [Forest Supervisor Due Diligence – Campbell River](#)

This two-day classroom workshop will equip supervisors with knowledge of their legal responsibilities and how to prove due diligence.

September 21 | [Forest Supervisor Communication – Kamloops](#)

This one-day classroom workshop will help supervisors and managers improve their communication skills at work.

September 22 | [Basic Incident Investigation – Prince George](#)

This course provides a basic understanding of the methods, tools, and processes needed to conduct an incident investigation.

September 22 | [Forest Supervisor Leadership and Professionalism – Kamloops](#)

This one-day classroom workshop will help participants understand their strengths and weaknesses, and to recognize how their personal style impacts the workers they supervise.

September 26 - 30 | [Falling Supervisor – Prince George](#)

Participants will learn the roles and responsibilities of a falling supervisor and will become familiar with processes used by a falling supervisor to support their due diligence.