

May 14, 2015

Follow AHS_Media on Twitter 

ATV safety urged ahead of long weekend

CALGARY – As Albertans gear up for the May long weekend, Alberta Health Services (AHS) is reminding all residents, and particularly parents of children less than 16 years of age, to be mindful of the significant risks associated with the use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs).

“We know that children less than 16 years of age have not yet developed to the point of having the strength, skills or judgment needed to operate an ATV, and this includes ATVs marketed as ‘child-sized’,” says Dr. Richard Musto, Medical Officer of Health – Calgary Zone.

From April 1, 2014 through March 31, 2015, 318 Albertans less than 16 years of age were injured on ATVs, and 40 of these children were injured severely enough to be admitted to an Alberta hospital. Of the 40 injured children, two were injured so severely as to pass away.

“The data illustrates a devastating trend, and that trend is reemerging over the past few weeks already,” says Musto. “From April 19 to May 10 alone, 18 children were seen in Alberta’s two children’s Emergency Departments (combined). Seven of these children were admitted to the hospitals, and one has died. These needless injuries and deaths can be stopped.”

AHS advises all parents of children less than 16 years of age to ensure their child does not drive or ride in an ATV.

Albertans 16 years of age and older are reminded to take the following precautions to ensure their ATV excursions are as safe as possible:

- **Get Trained**
Before you hit the trails, get formal hands-on training from a recognized/trained ATV instructor. Don’t be shy about refreshing your training seasonally.
- **Wear the Gear**
A helmet can save your life: from 2002 – 2011, 44 per cent of ATV-rider deaths in Alberta were due to head injuries. In 77 per cent of these head injury deaths, the ATV riders were not wearing a helmet. In addition to a helmet, always wear a jacket, long pants, goggles, boots and gloves.
- **Look First**
Be sure you’re aware of the weather forecast, fire outlook/potential, and any hazards (geographical, animal or human) that the trail(s) you’re on could pose.
- **Buckle Up**
Be sure that you’re fastened in properly, and that all gear and equipment (including your ATV restraints) are in proper working condition before you hit the trails.
- **Drive Sober**
Don’t drink or do drugs before or while operating an ATV. Fifty-four per cent of those who died in ATV crashes between 2002 and 2011 tested positive for alcohol.
- **Seek Help**
Before you head out on the trail, let others know where you’re going and when they should expect you back. This helps your loved ones know when to call for help if you’ve been gone too long. Take a cell phone or working radio with you, as well as a first aid kit. Never hesitate to call for help if you’re stuck, have damaged your ATV, or are injured.

Follow AHS_Media on Twitter 

For more information on ATV safety and injury prevention in Alberta, visit
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/injuryprevention.asp>.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

For media inquiries, contact:

Shannon M. Evans

AHS Communications

403.618.1960

shannon.evans@albertahealthservices.ca