

Quad bikes in rural workplaces

Quad bikes are a major cause of death and serious injury each year in rural workplaces. Quad bikes are not safe for use in all terrains or for all tasks.

Most quad bike related incidents are associated with rollovers. The risk of a rollover is increased if the quad bike is crossing a slope, towing an attachment, travelling over rocky or uneven ground or carrying a heavy or unstable load.

Work health and safety duties

No matter where you work, including in rural workplaces, you must ensure people's health and safety is not put at risk.

If you own or manage the farm, you must identify the risks to yourself, your workers and others at the workplace and then take steps to eliminate, or where this is not possible, minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. You must manage the risks associated with the use of quad bikes just like any other risk.

If you work on a farm, you must do everything you can to protect your own health and safety.

Decide if a quad bike suits your needs

Before choosing any vehicle to use at work, you should carefully consider the safest and most appropriate vehicle for your purposes. For example:

Work

Consider the work that needs to be done, where, when, what needs to be carried, or whether the rider needs to look anywhere except at the ground ahead - for example, to look out for stock or fencing.

Rider

Consider who will be operating the quad bike, the terrain they will be operating it in and the tasks they will be doing. The rider should be trained, wear personal protective equipment and have demonstrated they can safely operate the vehicle. Quad bikes require an active riding technique that may be physically demanding. The rider should be fit enough to ride safely.

Loads and Towing

Consider what loads will be carried or towed and in what conditions. Sloping terrain will reduce the maximum load that can be carried safely. Check the quad bike manufacturer's specifications for weight and towing. Towing attachments or carrying loads on the front or rear racks of a quad bike will affect stability and handling. Liquid loads, like spray tanks, are particularly unstable as contents can shift.

Conditions

Consider the terrain where the quad bike will be used. Rocky, steep, uneven, sandy or muddy terrain increases the risk of quad bike rollover.

Passengers

Consider whether more than one person is needed to do the work. Most quad bikes are designed for one rider. Never carry a passenger on a single rider quad bike.

Safety

Choose a vehicle that is fit for purpose and provides the rider and any passengers with the greatest level of safety for each task. Always read the manufacturer's recommendations for the vehicle, the warning labels and owner's manual, and always maintain the vehicle so it is in good working order.

Alternatives to quad bikes include small utility vehicles, four wheel drives, small trucks, small farm tractors, motorcycles or side-by-side vehicles.

Two wheeled motorcycles may be suitable for some specific tasks given their mobility and light weight. Side by side vehicles may be more suitable for others because the operator remains seated, and they generally have rollover protection structures and operator restraints like seat belts.

Risk management plan

If you decide a quad bike is the most suitable vehicle for your needs, you must identify the hazards and manage the risks associated with its use.

Examples of how you might manage the risks associated with quad bikes include:

Access – blocking off access to particularly hazardous areas like unstable ground or steep slopes, and removing the key from the quad bike when it is not in use so it cannot be ridden without your permission.

Rules – developing rules for riding the quad bike, such as setting down rules about no-go areas, speed limits for specified tasks or in particular situations/terrain, what conditions the quad bike cannot be used in, and how to safely use attachments. Remember, when riding on public roads, road rules apply too.

Plan – if the rider will be working remotely and alone, agree on regular check-in times and make sure somebody knows where they are and when they will return.

Wear a helmet – ensuring that riders and passengers wear a helmet at all times.

Consider an operator protective device – if there is a risk of a rollover, consider fitting an appropriate operator protective device.

Always consider the manufacturer's specification and safety warnings.

Some of the major risks associated with quad bikes and examples of controls are provided below.

Managing the risks associated with using quad bikes in rural workplaces

Potential risk	Examples of controls
The quad bike	<p>All quad bikes are different. Familiarise yourself with the one you're using.</p> <p>Undertake regular maintenance checks. Check the manufacturer's instructions for information and take remedial action where issues are found.</p> <p>Conduct a pre-operation check before riding. Check tyres, chain-drive, brakes, clutch, throttle, fuel and oil.</p> <p>Consider whether you will be riding on dirt or bitumen and check tyre pressures are suitable for the conditions and road surface.</p> <p>Wash the quad bike regularly—do not direct high-pressure hoses at the bearings as this can cause mechanical problems. Keeping the quad bike clean facilitates the free movement of brake and suspension components, which reduces the risk of rollover.</p> <p>Control the access to the quad bike and the key when the bike is not in use.</p> <p>Fit full footplates to protect feet when mounting and dismounting.</p> <p>Conduct a risk assessment to determine if there is a risk of roll over. If there is, consider whether an operator protective device is suitable for use.</p>
The rider	<p>Provide riders with the information, training, instruction or supervision necessary to protect them and others from health and safety risks. Training can be workplace or task specific and may include general training provided by a supplier, manufacturer or industry training provider.</p> <p>Always wear an appropriate and properly fitting helmet. When riding on a public road the rider must wear a helmet that complies with AS/NZS 1698:2006: <i>Protective helmets for vehicle users</i> or <i>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Regulation 22.05 (UNECE22-05)</i>. The helmet should fit well, be securely fastened, and maintained in good condition (follow the manufacturer's instructions regarding care and maintenance). When riding on private land, wearing a helmet that complies with NZS 8600-02 may be appropriate, but only if the speed of the quad bike does not exceed 30km/hr.</p> <p>Never carry a passenger, including children, on single rider quad bikes as it can adversely affect quad bike stability and increases the risk of rollover.</p> <p>Suitable boots, sun protection, eye protection and gloves should also be worn.</p> <p>Never ride a quad bike under the influence of drugs or alcohol.</p>
Working alone	<p>Tell someone where you are working and when you plan to return.</p> <p>Carry a mobile phone, satellite phone or two-way radio.</p> <p>Agree on regular check-in times with someone else in the workplace.</p>
Children	<p>Children under the age of 16 should never ride adult sized quad bikes.</p> <p>If children under the age of 16 do ride, the quad bike should be age appropriate and designed specifically for them.</p> <p>Ensure children are trained before they use a quad bike and are supervised at all times. Ideally, arrange for them to take a professionally organised riding course.</p> <p>Set speed restrictions and place limits on where they can go and the type of terrain.</p> <p>Never carry a child as a passenger on a single rider quad bike.</p>

Potential risk	Examples of controls
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Towing and attachments	Keep within the towing load limits stated by the manufacturer. The carrying capacity will be reduced by the rider's weight, the weight of attachments and the load carried in those attachments.
	Use attachments designed for and compatible with the quad bike. Attach loads securely and at the lowest possible height.
	When towing and using attachments, consider the following:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– the steepness of the terrain– the maximum tow weight (trailer + load)– the maximum tongue weight (weight on hitch point)– the maximum quad bike load and load capacity– the manufacturer's recommended carrying limits, and– how front and rear loads will affect stability and visibility.
	Always use spray tanks with baffles fitted.
	When towing, there is a lot more weight to control. Balance the trailer and keep the centre of gravity as low as possible.

Further information

For further information see the [*Guide for managing the risks of machinery in rural workplaces*](#) or go to [QuadWatch](#) on the Safe Work Australia website www.swa.gov.au.

Disclaimer

Note: this fact sheet provides general information only and should not be used as a substitute for seeking professional legal advice for your specific circumstances. The contents of this fact sheet are correct and based on available information at the time of writing. However, there may be subsequent decisions of courts or tribunals on the matter covered by this fact sheet which mean that the contents are no longer accurate.

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