

# UTILITY TASK/TERRIAN VEHICLE (UTV) SAFETY



## INTRODUCTION

Utility task/terrain vehicles (more commonly referred to as UTVs or side-by-side) have become a popular mode of transportation for industries such as agriculture, schools, warehouses, emergency responders, and so on. These types of vehicles can be simple to operate, but improper operation or maintenance could expose you or passengers to harm. In this lesson, we will cover the hazards, the personal protective equipment, and the safe work practices associated with these vehicles.

*Note: Depending on your state, certain training/permitting classes may be required before drivers of UTVs can drive off-road, in addition to having a valid driver's license. Additionally, there may be age restrictions on operators within your state or by the manufacturer. Please check your state's regulations/laws for road and off-road use of UTVs.*

## HAZARDS

Whether you are driving the UTV on a paved surface or off-road or when performing maintenance tasks, you could be exposed to one or more of the following hazards:

- Tipping or rolling of the unit due to terrain/weather conditions, excessive speed, and/or exceeding the manufacturer-specified or recommended weight limit for the vehicle
- Pinch points (areas where loose clothing, jewelry, long hair, and/or extremities could get caught)
- Collisions with other UTVs or vehicles
- Burns from skin contact with heated components
- Slipping, tripping, or falling when entering or exiting the vehicle
- Eye irritation or damage from dust or insects getting into the eyes
- Getting smacked in the face or extremities by low-laying branches or brush that can get flexed back and then come forward
- Exposure to inclement weather conditions



## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

To help minimize the chances of an accident occurring, you should wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for the terrain and weather conditions that you will be driving the UTV in or when performing maintenance tasks on the unit. PPE may include:

- Helmet
- Goggles or safety glasses
- Gloves
- Long sleeve shirt



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- Long pants
- Close-fitting clothing
- Closed-toed shoes
- Wrist or arm restraints

Inspect all provided PPE for wear or damage before you put it on. Report worn or damaged items to your supervisor. Do NOT wear damaged PPE.

## SAFE WORK PRACTICES

### Before Driving a UTV

Before driving a UTV, you should do the following:

- Make sure that you have a valid driver's license.
- Where you will be taking the UTV off-road, become knowledgeable about designated trails.
- Read the manufacturer-provided owner's or operator's manual.
- Check the forecast for weather conditions.
  - Remember that weather conditions should be monitored throughout the day, as the weather can change at any time.
- Make sure that you are dressed appropriately for weather conditions and the terrain you will be driving on.
- Where applicable, assure that you have radios or other communication devices when you are going off-road.
- Become familiar with all the safety devices and features that come with your model of UTV.
- Inspect the vehicle in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
  - Typically, an inspection will include the following:
    - Checking for worn or damaged parts.
    - Checking for missing or modified parts.
    - Making sure that lights are working properly.
    - Checking fluid levels.
    - Checking the tire pressure.
    - Making sure that all safety and warning labels are in good condition and are legible.
  - Report worn or damaged parts to your supervisor or designated maintenance staff.
  - Refill fluids as needed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
  - Where applicable, make sure that electric vehicles have been properly charged in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
  - Refill tires to manufacturer-specified or recommended p.s.i. levels as needed and in accordance with your company's policies and procedures.
  - Replace safety and warning labels as needed.
  - Do NOT drive a UTV that is damaged or has missing or modified parts.
- Where applicable, inspect all attachments or trailers for worn or damaged parts.
  - Report attachments or trailers that have worn or damaged parts to your supervisor.
  - Do NOT use damaged attachments or trailers with your UTV.
  - Make sure that all attachments and/or trailers have been properly secured to the UTV in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.
- Where you will be carrying or towing loads, make sure that the load has been properly secured in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and your company policies and procedures.
  - Do NOT exceed the manufacturer-specified or recommended load limits.





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## When Driving a UTV

When driving a UTV, you should do the following:

- Only allow licensed and trained personnel to drive the UTV.
  - Do NOT allow anyone who is underage to drive the UTV in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your local or state laws and regulations.
- Do NOT drive a UTV while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
  - If you are on prescription medication that could affect your ability to safely drive the UTV, please speak with your supervisor.
- Only allow passengers in UTVs that have passenger seating.
  - Make sure that passengers are tall enough to reach handholds and that their feet are flat on the floorboards.
- Make sure that you and any passengers are properly seat belted in when a seat belt is present.
- Where applicable, make sure that all doors or window nets have been properly closed and secured.
- Keep extremities within the vehicle at all times.
- Be aware of your surroundings when driving and parking the vehicle.
  - Do NOT drive through deep water.
  - Check the manual for recommended water depths if you have to drive through water.
- Where applicable, obey all posted speed limits for UTVs.
- Drive to the terrain and weather conditions.
  - Drive at slower speeds when on uneven terrain, hills, when making turns, or when there are other hazards or slower vehicles.
  - Driving at excessive speeds could result in either tipping over or rolling.
- Do NOT perform tricks or attempts jumps when driving the UTV.
- Make sure that you move the steering wheel smoothly when making turns.
  - Jerking the steering wheel when turning could result in a tip-over or rollover.
- Make sure to stop at all blind intersections to check for vehicles, other UTVs, and pedestrians.
  - Always proceed with caution when at a blind intersection.
- When driving in warmer weather, make sure to take all provided rest and meal breaks and stay hydrated.
  - Immediately notify your supervisor if you start feeling and/or see someone displaying signs or symptoms of heat illness.
- Do NOT attempt to leave the vehicle if it is tipping or rolling over.
  - Trying to escape from a tipping or rolling vehicle could result in the unit landing on top of you, which could result in injury or death.
- When parking, only park on even, solid surfaces, and where applicable, in designated parking areas.
  - If you have to park on a hill, make sure that the unit is in the proper gear and that the parking brake is engaged. Once the brakes have been engaged, make sure that the tires are chocked or blocked in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures.

## Maintenance

To help make sure that your UTV continues to run properly, make sure that all maintenance tasks are performed in accordance with manufacturer-specified or recommended timetables and your company's policies and procedures. Additionally, only trained and authorized personnel should perform maintenance tasks on the UTV.





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## CONCLUSION

To conclude, UTVs have become widely used by many different industries to their versatility. And while these vehicles can be simple to drive, improper operation or maintenance could expose both you and passengers to harm. To help minimize the chances of an accident occurring, you should only drive the UTV on designated roads or trails, and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and your company's policies and procedures. Additionally, where they are provided, you and passengers should always wear a seatbelt. If you have questions about the UTVs at your workplace, please speak with your supervisor.

