# Be careful when riding all-terrain vehicles

UNIVERSITY PARK All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are the newest craze in recreational motorized vehicles Owners should be warned, however, that these vehicles are as dangerous as they as

ATVs are small recreational motorcycles with three large, soft tires designed for rough terrain. Whether used for farm work or recreation, they are popular additions to the motorcycle fa.nily Sales of the venicles over the last three years have soared, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

But ATV sales have mirrored the climbing miury and death rates of ATV riders.

"ATV accident rates will continue to rise until people become aware of the hazards and use better judgment in buying and using the vehicles, or until manufacturers voluntarily take safety measures into their own hands," Penn State farm safety specialist Dennis Murphy says.

Information from the CPSC's injury surveillance system indicates that the number of ATV-related accidents has increased from 8,600 in 1982 to 27,600 in 1983 and 54,000 in 1984. The ATV death toll since 1982 has topped 80.

believes Murphy ATVs may be more dangerous than other recreational vehicles for two reasons.

"ATVs can go places where other recreational vehicles like dirt bikes can't go -

over steeper hills. heavily forested terrain, mud holes," he says. "This exposure to hazardous terrain makes them dangerous.

"And the vehicles are unstable. The threewheeled models tip over easily on rough terrain."

Because the vehicles are powerful enough to move over rough ground, Murphy points out, ATVs work well on farms when towing equipment or checking farm operations. Farmers, however, should follow the same safety precautions as when operating trac-

As a safety checklist, Murphy offers the following suggestions:

Wear protective gear when riding an ATV. Gloves, helmets, goggles, long pants and work boots with strong heels should be worn while riding. "The body should be completely covered," Murphy says.

Start out at slow speeds in a familiar place, and don't ride n paved roads or streets.

Don't ride double, and don't operate after alcoholic using beverages.

First-time riders should be supervised when riding. "If the rider isn't ready emotionally physically for a motorbike or tractor, the rider isn't ready for an ATV," Murphy says.

Larger ATVs are meant for larger riders, and can travel at higher speeds. Children shouldn't ride the larger vehicles, Murphy says. and might be better off starting on four-wheeled

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