

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recreationists urged to know the rules and to drive off-highway vehicles safely

Orofino, Idaho--In the spirit of concern about the safety of all citizens, the Clearwater National Forest and Clearwater County Sheriff's Office are working together to inform off-highway vehicle (OHV) users about Idaho state laws regarding driver licensing and helmet requirements.

OHVs include both motorcycles and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

According to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, OHV registrations have increased by more than 62% in Idaho over the past five years. Clearwater County recorded a whopping 81% increase during this time period. This translates into a huge increase in OHV use, particularly ATVs, on private and public lands including national forests.

ATVs are a great way to have fun when they are operated with the respect due a powerful motor vehicle. When they are treated as toys, riders--including kids--are at high risk of injury and even death.

Recent national statistics posted at <http://www.atvsafety.gov/> show that approximately 600 to 900 people die and over 146,000 visit hospital emergency rooms annually as a result of ATV accidents. Perhaps most alarming is that children account for about 1 in every 5 ATV deaths.

Parental supervision is critical to keeping young people safe while riding OHVs, but local law enforcement personnel report it is common to observe young kids, often too young to have a driver's license, driving them without any direct adult supervision. The Forest Service and Clearwater County Sheriff's Office want to remind parents of the following legal and safety requirements:

- **Kids must have a driver's license if they are riding OHVs on roads maintained for motor vehicle traffic. This includes all national forest roads that are open to full-size vehicles.** This state law was enacted to because kids under age 16 haven't had the education, training or experience with traffic and traffic rules. They don't instinctively look out for other traffic, stop at intersections, keep to the right or do all the other things that are second nature to licensed drivers.
- **Riders under the age of 18 must wear a helmet when operating OHVs.** While this is a requirement only for riders under 18, helmets are a good idea for everyone riding an OHV whether on roads or trails.
- **Kids should ride ATVs that are designed for young people.** All ATV manufacturers recommend that children under age 16 refrain from riding adult-size ATVs. That warning is prominently displayed on recent ATV models. According to <http://www.atvsafety.gov/>, kids under age 16 are twice as likely to be injured on a full-size ATV as on models specifically designed for young riders.
- **The majority of ATVs are designed only for a single rider.** Despite this warning which is displayed on ATVs, it is not uncommon to see two or more passengers on an ATV - sometimes including multiple kids. Controlling an ATV requires the operator to shift their weight – something that is much more difficult when a passenger is aboard. Risks of accident and serious injury increase dramatically when there are multiple passengers and kids are at greatest risk in the event of an accident.

In the interest of safety the Clearwater National Forest is making enforcement of driver's license and helmet regulations a high priority – especially on main roads. Parents should be aware that they can be held responsible and cited when kids are in violation of state law while riding on national forest roads.

The Clearwater National Forest and Clearwater County Sheriff's Office both enforce motor vehicle laws that apply to ATV use. They encourage all OHV users to

register and operate their vehicles according to Idaho laws (<http://www.idaho-ohv.org/>), get safety training and ride responsibly.

The Clearwater County Sheriff's Office offers ATV rider safety courses to the public. These classes are offered to adults as well as children. The class starts with a short written test and classroom discussion followed by hands-on experience on ATVs. Anyone interested in this class can contact the Clearwater County Sheriff's Office.

For more information about OHV laws and operation, contact the Clearwater County Sheriff's Office at (208) 476-4521 or the Clearwater National Forest at (208) 476-4541.

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