



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 - Montgomery, AL 36104  
Phone 334-206-5300 - Fax 334-206-5534

[www.adph.org](http://www.adph.org)

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## Children's health agencies announce initiative to increase awareness of ATV-related injury

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### CONTACT:

Kathy Bowers, Children's Hospital  
(205) 939-9002

Carol Mysinger, Alabama Department of Public Health  
(334) 206-5571

Linda Lee, Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
(334) 954-2543

In response to the increasing incidence of life-altering injuries in children from all-terrain vehicle (ATV) crashes, the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Children's Hospital of Alabama, the Injury Free Coalition for Kids, the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and VOICES for Alabama's Children have launched a statewide educational and awareness campaign.

A key component of the campaign is the distribution of educational posters to every pediatric practice, health department and school nurse in Alabama. Designed to illustrate the risks of children riding or driving ATVs, or four-wheelers, the 18-by-24-inch posters depict a wheelchair beneath a headline that reads "This could be your next 4-wheeler." Pertinent facts about deaths and injuries from ATV accidents, along with AAP recommendations, are included on the posters.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald E. Williamson said, "Six children, ages 18 months to 14 years, died and 211 children and young people under age 18 sustained traumatic injuries in ATV collisions in Alabama during an eight-year period. This education and awareness campaign will help educate Alabamians about the need to protect our children from these senseless tragedies that are effecting far too many families."

The AAP and medical and safety experts at Children's Hospital strongly recommend that no child under the age of 16 be allowed to ride or drive ATVs. Children do not have the physical strength to handle the vehicle, nor the judgment, motor and perceptive skills necessary to properly maneuver the vehicle.

In addition to the poster distribution, Children's Hospital is running advertisements in Rave Theatres throughout June and July and again in November and December to call attention to the importance of following recommendations for ATV injury prevention.

“We routinely see ATV injuries in our trauma rooms,” said Kathy Monroe, M.D., FAAP, an emergency department physician at Children’s. “All are children under the recommended age to drive these vehicles and many are as young as three years old.”

The impetus for the awareness campaign is data that reflects a 200 percent increase in ATV traumas seen by emergency medicine physicians at Children’s Hospital over the past 10 years. In the last two years alone, 102 children have been treated at Children’s for traumatic injuries from ATV crashes, and 15 percent of the traumas received by Children’s in 2007 were injuries sustained in ATV crashes—more than one per week, on average. Injuries from ATV crashes are six times more likely to result in hospitalization than a bicycle wreck and 12 times more like to result in death. Among children ages 14 and under, the annual cost of ATV-related injuries is more than \$3.3 billion and the annual cost of deaths from ATVs is almost \$5.7 million.

Despite the alarming increases in ATV deaths and life-altering injuries, government regulation continues to be all but absent. Alabama is one of only three states in the country without ATV safety-related laws.

Most ATV crashes involve collisions with immovable objects and rollovers that often pin the driver or rider beneath the vehicle. Both cause serious, often life-threatening or life-changing bodily harm. Brain injuries and damage to internal organs are common in ATV crashes.