

The ATV Baby Sitter? Not!

Of the many serious challenges our Maine Game Wardens, Law Enforcement and other agencies have and the most difficult to understand, is when parents allow children to go off on their own unsupervised with their ATVs (or motorcycles) . It is a symptom of the greater issue of the need for appropriate training. Unfortunately, some people don't seem to understand or care about the laws of safety and reasonable common sense.

A study was published in the American Journal of Pediatrics that pointed out the dangers of children using ATVs. In my opinion, if we want to protect the children of Maine we should encourage training and parental supervision

Most Maine Game Wardens and Law Enforcement regret spoiling a perfectly beautiful afternoon on the trails by apprehending youthful ATV enthusiasts who stray from their parents supervision. Yet, as a means of being a responsible parent himself, he will take the time to train and educate the parents on the dangers of unsupervised ATV use, as he writes up the reckless endangerment citation for the parent.

I have also seen serious dangerous activities conducted by unsupervised underage youth. They are documented adequately in other locations on this web site.

Here's the bottom line. Allowing children under 16 to venture off on their own is not legal. Neglect of this nature is also a form of child abuse, which is also illegal. The most serious accidents in this age group typically occur when these youth are not supervised by a parent or guardian. Forget the accidents, you know how easy it is to become disoriented or lost out in the forest and you are not a child. These are the facts. Now do you want the law makers to legislate away the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors with our children, or do you want to accept the responsibility to train your children and supervise them in their use of the ATV. The choice is up to you.

Please keep in mind. The ATV is not a baby sitter. If you allow your under age child to venture off on their own with an ATV it is just as though you just allowed them to go play in the road, literally! Now would you do that? I certainly hope not.

Safety is what comes at the conclusion of preparation, planning, education, training and continued supervision.