

Quad Bike Carnage Continues

The death toll from quad bike incidents has tragically reached record highs in the past week, with at least 23 people having been killed nationally throughout 2011. In addition, there will be dozens of others that have experienced near-life ending incidents and will carry permanent disabilities for the rest of their lives.

For the families and friends of these 23 victims in 2011 and the 140 others that have died over the past 10 years on quad bikes in Australia, the Christmas period will be a very sad time indeed, where questions of “what if ...” will always be raised.

“We know from Coroners records that about half of these incidents involve rollovers of the vehicles, with many dying from asphyxiation and/or crush injury” said Dr Tony Lower Director of the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety (University of Sydney).

The quad bike industry’s own data on the effectiveness of crush protection devices that would prevent many of these deaths, illustrates a protective benefit of up to 29% for the one commercially available crush protection device in Australia.

“I am sure that for those families that have lost someone as a result of a rollover, they would have happily grasped the opportunity to fit a crush protection device to increase the chance that their loved ones would be sitting down with them over Christmas lunch. Yet this is hard for the public and retailers to know and take action on when they have been provided questionable information by the Federated Chamber of Automotive Industries (FCAI) and manufacturers.”

The accuracy of the FCAI’s early anti crush protection campaign has been the subject of an investigation by the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission (ACCC). The ACCC found that the campaign which was widely touted to the public, government officials and quad bike retailers may have contravened the misleading and deceptive conduct provisions of the Competition and Consumers Act (2010). This Act prohibits a range of anti-competitive conduct and provides for the protection of consumers through the prohibition of misleading, deceptive and otherwise false trading practices. The FCAI were also advised that they should pass these concerns onto their retailers.


“The big question here is what has happened in the 3 months since the FCAI were advised on this issue by the ACCC. One thing we know for sure is that during this time a further 11 people have died on quad bikes, several of which have involved rollovers that may have been prevented by fitting a crush protection device” stated Dr Lower. “The only action the FCAI appear to have taken is to close down their ATV Safety Website in early November, which industry sources said would be back up and running by November 30, but is still yet to appear.”

“It is also not clear if any positive steps have been taken with retailers, for example, were they informed of the ACCC’s concerns or was this too much of an embarrassment for the FCAI to admit publicly?”

“Embarrassing or not, the families of those people killed and permanently injured in such rollover events have a right to know why the FCAI, as suggested by the ACCC, has not only misrepresented the evidence but why they have not addressed this issue in a timely manner. The inaction and questionable approach of both the FCAI and manufacturers is showing complete disregard for the safety of their customers.”

There are steps that can be taken to reduce deaths and serious injuries on quad bikes (see box), but the FCAI and manufacturers simply have to do better as every delay, will result in more preventable deaths.

Further independent information on quad bike safety can be obtained from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety (02 6752 8210) or by visiting the website www.aghealth.org.au

<p>Most Effective</p>  <p>Least Effective</p>	<p>Elimination - don't use the quad bike for the farm task</p> <p>Substitution - use a more stable machine such as a tractor, farm ute or side-by-side vehicle</p> <p style="text-align: center;">....if still deciding to use a quad bike</p> <p>Engineering Control - fit a tested crush protective device</p> <p>Administrative Controls - ensure training, induction and rider supervision (<i>strictly no passengers of any age & no children under 16 riding quads</i>)</p> <p>Personal Protective Equipment - wear an approved helmet</p>
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