

# VERMONT

## ALL-TERRAIN

### MANUAL



**2021**



**Phil Scott**, Governor  
State of Vermont

**Joe Flynn**, Secretary  
Agency of Transportation

**Wanda Minoli**, Commissioner  
Department of Motor Vehicles



# Message from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles

All-Terrain vehicles (ATVs) can be fun and help bring the driver closer to nature. While enjoying this adventure, respect the property rights of others and especially the domain of all wildlife.

Safety is an area of concern. The ATV is capable of carrying the driver almost anywhere, but its unsafe or careless operation may cause serious or even fatal injuries. This manual will help you become a more knowledgeable ATV operator.

Please make sure you are aware of your limits and the limitations of your ATV. Increase your safety awareness, operate safely, protect yourself and others and enjoy the sport.



Wanda Minoli  
Commissioner

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**State of Vermont**  
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***All office visits are by appointment only.  
Visit [mydmv.vermont.gov](http://mydmv.vermont.gov) to schedule.***

## **Office Locations**

### *Bennington*

Bennington County - Branch Office  
530 Main St

### *Dummerston*

Windham County - Branch Office  
AOT District #2 Office, Route 5

### *Middlebury*

Addison County - Branch Office  
Court House, 7 Mahady Drive

### *Montpelier*

Washington County - **Main Office**  
120 State Street

### *Newport*

Orleans County - Branch Office  
100 Main Street

### *Saint Albans*

Franklin County - Branch Office  
27 Fisher Pond Rd

### *Saint Johnsbury*

Caledonia County - Branch Office  
Green Mtn Mall  
1998 Memorial Dr

### *South Burlington*

Chittenden County - Branch Office  
4 Market Street

### *Springfield*

Windsor County - Branch Office  
100 Mineral St, Suite 103

### *Rutland*

Rutland County - Branch Office  
101 State Place

### *White River Junction*

Windsor County - Branch Office  
226 Holiday Drive

## **Vermont State Holidays**

New Year's Day

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Presidents' Day

Town Meeting Day

Memorial Day

Independence Day

Bennington Battle Day

Labor Day

Veterans' Day

Thanksgiving Day

Day After Thanksgiving

Christmas Day

January 1<sup>st</sup>

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in January

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in February

1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday in March

Last Monday In May

July 4<sup>th</sup>

August 16<sup>th</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> Monday in September

November 11<sup>th</sup>

4<sup>th</sup> Thursday in November

Friday after Thanksgiving

December 25<sup>th</sup>

All offices are closed on Vermont State Holidays. Any legal holiday which falls on a Saturday shall be observed on the preceding Friday. Any legal holiday which falls on a Sunday shall be observed on the following Monday

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## What is an ATV?

"All-terrain vehicle" or "ATV" means any nonhighway recreational vehicle, except snowmobiles, having no less than two low pressure tires (10 pounds per square inch, or less), not wider than 64 inches with two-wheel ATVs having permanent, full-time power to both wheels, and having a dry weight of less than 1,700 pounds, when used for cross-country travel on trails or on any one of the following or a combination thereof: land, water, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, and natural terrain. An ATV on a public highway shall be considered a motor vehicle. An ATV shall not include an electric personal assistive mobility device.

## What is off-highway use?

Any recreational vehicle using cross-country trails, or a combination of land, water, snow, ice, marsh, swampland, and natural terrain is considered to be operating off-highway.

## Can I operate on a highway or road?

Yes, under the following conditions:

- ◆ On a road that is not plowed or maintained during the snow season.
- ◆ On a road that has been opened to all-terrain vehicles by the select board or trustees or local governing body and is so posted by the municipality.
  - ↳ **NOTE:** A road open to snowmobiles may not be open to all-terrain vehicles.

## Can I cross a public highway?

Yes, if you cross at an angle approximately 90 degrees to the direction of the highway and at a place where no obstruction prevents a safe and quick crossing. You must come to a complete stop before crossing any highway. Always yield the right of way to vehicles or pedestrians on the highway you are crossing. If you are under 16 years of age, do not cross the highway unless someone 18 years of age or older supervises your crossing.

## Where am I not allowed to operate my ATV?

You may not operate your ATV:

- ◆ On any road not posted as open for ATV travel.
- ◆ On anyone's land without their written permission.

- ◆ On any public land or body of water that has not been designated for ATV use by the Secretary of Natural Resources.
- ◆ In any area in any manner intended or reasonably expected to harass, drive or pursue any wildlife.
- ◆ Within any cemetery, public or private.
- ◆ On any limited access highways, rights-of-way or approaches unless permitted by the traffic committee.
- ◆ On any portion of the national system of interstate or defense highways, unless permitted by the traffic committee.
- ◆ On any sidewalk, unless permitted by the select board or trustees of the local governing body.

### **Where can I operate my ATV?**

You can operate your ATV in the following areas provided you obey certain conditions:

- ◆ Cross a public road at a 90-degree angle and at an area that gives an unobstructed view of the crossing.
- ◆ On any road not plowed during the snow season or plowed road which has been posted to allow ATVs.
- ◆ On property owned by yourself.
- ◆ On property owned by others provided you:
  1. Have their written permission on your person, which shows the specific area and time of day, or days in which you may operate; or
  2. Proof of membership in a club or association, which has been granted permission for ATVs either orally or in writing from the landowner.
- ◆ On any public land or body of public water which has been designated by the Secretary of Natural Resources for ATV operation.

The Secretary of Natural Resources has designated all frozen bodies of water open to ATV travel, except:

- Amity Pond, Windsor County
- Levi Pond, Caledonia County
- Marsh Pond, Rutland County
- Bear Pond, Lamoille County

- Sterling Pond, Lamoille County
- Lake of the Clouds, Lamoille County
- ◆ ATVs which are registered and being used for agricultural purposes may be operated beside a public highway no closer than three feet from the traveled portion and only within the confines of the farm.

### **Who must register?**

Any ATV owner who plans to operate anywhere except on land owned by the owner of the ATV or in a ski area for purposes of grooming snow or rescue operations.

### **How old must I be to operate my ATV?**

You must be 12 years of age or older. If you are under 12 years, you must be on land owned by your parents, family or guardian; have written permission of the landowner or lessee where you are operating; or you must be directly supervised by someone at least 18 years of age.

The following guidelines should be used in driving an ATV:

- ◆ A child under 12 years old should never drive an ATV with an engine size greater than 70 cc.
- ◆ A youth under 16 years old should never drive an ATV with an engine size greater than 90 cc.

### **Does my ATV need to be titled?**

Vermont titles vehicles (including Motorboats, ATVs, and snowmobiles) that are 15 years old or newer based on the calendar year. *For example: from January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2021, Vermont will title vehicles (including Motorboats, ATVs, and snowmobiles) with the model year 2007 or newer.*

Exceptions:

- ◆ ATVs owned by the United States (federal government) unless they are registered in Vermont.
- ◆ ATVs owned by a manufacturer or dealer and held for sale.
- ◆ ATVs owned by a non-resident of Vermont whose state of residence does not require a certificate of title for them.
- ◆ ATVs owned by a non-resident of Vermont whose state of residence does require a certificate of title for any such ATV, and the title has been issued or applied for.

## What documents must I carry when operating my ATV?

- ◆ Written permission from any landowner on whose land you are traveling, or proof of membership in an association or club that has been granted either oral or written permission from the landowner.
- ◆ Valid registration certificate. Be sure the registration plate is properly and securely attached to the ATV.

## What equipment does my ATV need?

- ◆ One or more headlights, all working.
- ◆ A red rear light that works.
- ◆ Number plate bracket.
- ◆ Brakes in good mechanical condition.
- ◆ A United States Forest Service qualified spark arrester.
- ◆ Effective muffler system.

## What should I wear when riding?

The following protective gear should be worn every time you ride an ATV:

- ◆ **Helmet:** Your helmet is the most important piece of protective gear for safe riding. A helmet can help prevent a serious head injury. Selecting the right helmet is important and easy if a few basic tips are kept in mind. Select a helmet that bears the label of either the Department of Transportation, the American National Standards Institute or the Snell Memorial Foundation. The helmet should fit snugly and be securely fastened. Full-face helmets protect your face as well as your head. Open-face types are lighter and cooler, but should be used with a chin guard that will offer chin and mouth protection.
- ◆ **Eye protection:** Eye protection is a must. If an object hits you in the face, such as a rock, branch or even a bug, it will distract you and may cause blindness if it hits you in the eyes. Regular sunglasses do not provide adequate protection. The helmet's face shield or a pair of riding goggles will protect your eyes properly. Select well-ventilated goggles that can be securely fastened and are free from scratches.
- ◆ **Gloves:** Gloves provide protection from abrasions and help to keep your hands from getting sore, tired or cold. Off-road style motorcycle gloves provide a good combination of protection and comfort.



- ◆ **Boots:** You should wear a pair of boots that lace above the ankle for ankle support, with low heels to help prevent the boot from slipping off the footrests.
- ◆ **Shirt and pants:** A long-sleeved shirt and long pants should be worn to reduce abrasions on the body.

## What should I do before riding?

Inspecting the mechanical condition of your ATV before each day's use is important for minimizing the chances of injury or becoming stranded. The fact that you can ride farther in an hour than you can walk in a day emphasizes the need to maintain your ATV in peak operational form. The owner's manual should be used to ensure proper understanding all of the critical points on your machine.

Check the following before using your ATV:

- ◆ **Tires:** Always maintain the recommended tire pressure consistently in each tire. If the tires on your ATV have unequal pressure, the ATV will pull toward the tire with the least air pressure. Most automotive tire pressure gauges will not accurately measure the low pressure typically used in ATV tires. A gauge designed for low pressure should be used. Wheel lug nuts should be checked to make sure they are tight. Grasp each tire at the front and rear, and then try to rock the tire on its axle to check for worn-out axle bearings and loose nuts. Always use a torque wrench while following the tightening procedures and specifications for all fasteners outlined in your operator's manual.
- ◆ **Throttle:** Check the throttle operation while moving the handlebars fully to the left and then fully to the right. An accumulation of mud and dirt can restrict cable movement and prevent the throttle from closing.
- ◆ **Brakes:** Your brakes are a crucial part of riding and they must always be in top condition. Make sure they work smoothly and that they are in adjustment according to the instructions in the owner's manual.
- ◆ **Light and switches:** Be sure all lights are working. Check engine stop switches by switching them off and on during the warm-up period.
- ◆ **Oil and fuel:** Check the oil and fuel with the engine off. Look for fuel or oil leaks.
- ◆ **Drivetrain and chassis:** Inspect your chain for proper adjustment, adequate lubrication and signs of wear. If your ATV is equipped with a drive shaft rather than a chain, check for oil leaks and maintain its oil supply as outlined in your owner's manual. Rough terrain will loosen chassis parts. Look and feel for loose parts while the engine is

off. Shake handlebars, footrests and other similar components before each ride, and periodically check major fasteners with a wrench. The operator's manual should be read and understood before attempting to operate your ATV. It will contain specifications and procedures that apply directly to your model and should be considered as the final authority for safe operation of your ATV. Such information may include tire inflation pressures, torque specifications for fasteners, oil types and service intervals, battery maintenance, or brake adjustment and service.

### How should I operate my ATV?

- In a careful, considerate manner at all times. Always put safety first. Avoid:
  - Jumping obstacles;
  - Driving too fast;
  - Crossing barbed wire or any wire or wooden fences; or
  - Thin ice.
- ◆ Never operate in a careless or negligent manner so as to endanger another person or property. NEVER operate your ATV when you are under the influence of drugs or intoxicating beverages.



Figure 2. Keep both feet firmly on the footrests and shift your body weight forward when climbing a hill

### OPERATING YOUR ATV

#### ◆ Turns:

Most ATVs have solid rear axles, which turn each of the rear wheels at the same speed. This requires special turning skills, which primarily involve shifting your body weight. Low-speed turns require that you shift your body weight forward and to the outside of the turn as you turn the handlebar. The objective is to reduce weight on the inside rear

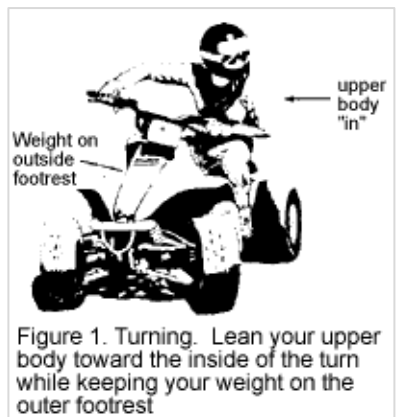


Figure 1. Turning. Lean your upper body toward the inside of the turn while keeping your weight on the outer footrest

wheel. For turns at higher speeds, you must lean your upper body toward the inside of the turn while keeping your weight on the outer footrest. This balances the higher cornering forces as vehicle speed increases. If your ATV starts tipping during a turn at any speed, lean your upper body farther into the turn while gradually reducing the throttle and making the turn wider. (See Figure 1)



Figure 4. Keep both feet firmly on the footrests and lean your body uphill when crossing slopes

◆ **Braking**

Begin the braking process by releasing the throttle and shifting to a lower gear well in advance of the intended stopping point. With this method, the engine helps to slow your ATV. Applying brakes smoothly and evenly will bring your ATV to its quickest stop. Apply brakes lightly on slippery surfaces. When descending a hill, shift to a lower gear for engine braking rather than riding the brakes for an extended period of time.

◆ **Climbing**

The first rule to remember is to stay off hills too steep for your ability or that of your ATV. When approaching a hill, you should keep both feet firmly on the footrests and shift your body weight forward by sliding forward on the seat. For steep hills, stand on the footrests and lean forward to shift as much weight forward as possible. To reduce the chance of stalling the engine, climb hills in a low gear. If the engine does stall, you must apply the brakes before the forward motion stops. If your ATV stalls and then rolls backward, apply brakes slowly. Rapidly applying brakes during a backward roll can cause a rear overturn. (See Figure 2)

## ◆ **Descending**

Before descending a hill, you should shift the transmission into a low gear and point the ATV directly downhill. Keep both feet firmly on the footrests and slide back on the seat to increase your stability and the effectiveness of the brakes. (See Figure 3)

## ◆ **Riding across slopes**

Avoid crossing steep slopes and slopes where there is slippery or bumpy terrain. If you do ride across slopes, keep both feet firmly on the footrests and lean your body uphill. If the ATV begins to tip, turn the front wheels downhill. If the terrain prohibits your turning downhill, dismount on the uphill side immediately. (See Figure 4)

## ◆ **Additional equipment**

Many operators are taking advantage of the additional equipment available to increase the uses of their ATVs. This equipment can be divided into two categories: that which is rigidly mounted on the ATV and pull-type equipment that is towed by the ATV's drawbar. While this equipment can increase your machine's uses, it imposes some new operating restrictions that must be followed for safe operation.

## ◆ **Rigid Mount Equipment:**

Rigid mount equipment is usually bolted to the front or rear of the machine and includes luggage racks to transport feed or supplies, broadcast seeders and wick applicators for chemical weed control. This type of mounting places the entire weight



Figure 3. Shift into low gear and point the ATV directly downhill when descending a slope

burden on your ATV. You should realize that this will have a significant impact on the weight and balance of your machine. The center of gravity may be moved to a position of lessened stability. Mounting on the front can make steering more difficult and decrease traction on the rear wheels. Mounting on the rear can increase the chance of a rear overturn. Either mounting can increase the chance of a side overturn and requires added caution when operating on level as well as sloped ground.

### ◆ **Pull Type Equipment:**

Pull type equipment attached to the drawbar varies from a wagon of firewood to a row-crop sprayer. This type of mounting also has an effect on an ATV's stability. As the amount of drawbar pull required for the load increases, so does the tendency for the front end of the ATV to rise. Caution should be used not to expect more from your ATV than it can safely provide.

Whenever equipment is added, counterweights can be used to offset the load and improve the new balance of your machine. Be careful not to exceed the weight limitations set forth by the ATV manufacturer. Remember, just because your ATV can pull a heavy load does not mean it can safely stop it.

## **Who enforces the ATV Law and Rules?**

- ◆ The following enforcement officers may enforce ATV laws and rules: Sheriffs, Deputy Sheriffs, Constables, Police Officers, States Attorneys, Motor Vehicle Inspectors, State Game Wardens, and State Police.
- ◆ You are required to stop your ATV for any enforcement officer wearing identifying insignia or operating a law enforcement vehicle sounding a siren or displaying a flashing blue light or blue and white signal lamp.

- ◆ You can be prosecuted if you do not stop for an enforcement officer when signaled to do so.

## **What will happen if I violate the Law when operating my ATV?**

You can be fined and, you may have your ATV registration suspended or revoked.

## **What should I do if I am involved in a crash with my ATV?**

- ◆ If you are involved in a crash with someone else, you must immediately stop and render whatever assistance may be reasonably necessary.
- ◆ You must give your name, residence, registration number and the name of the owner of the ATV to the person injured and/or the owner of the damaged property.
- ◆ If someone is injured, or killed, or damage to the other person's property exceeds \$100.00, you must notify an enforcement officer immediately. A crash report must be sent to the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles within 72 hours after the crash.

## **Do I have to insure my ATV?**

No, however, the loss of your ATV, because of a crash, fire or theft, will be costly for you. There are insurance policies available to protect you against such losses. Remember, insurance protects your investment.

## **REGISTERING AND TITLING**

Registration is required for any ATV operated on any private or public land except land owned by the ATV owner, off highway in a

ski area for the purpose of grooming trails, maintenance or in rescue operations, or for official use by a federal, state or municipal agency, and only if the ATV is identified with name or seal of the agency.

Vermont titles vehicles (including Motorboats, ATVs, and snowmobiles) that are 15 years old or newer based on the calendar year. *For example: from January 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020, Vermont will title ATVs with the model year 2006 or newer.*

## **Sales and Use Tax:**

- ◆ At the time of purchase from a dealer or other business that sells ATVs a Sales and Use Tax of 6% is due on the purchase price (less trade-in).
- ◆ If you trade your ATV for another ATV, credit may be taken on the Sales & Use Tax due on the new vehicle in the amount of the value received for the previous ATV. This credit may only be claimed if you had paid a Sales & Use Tax (Purchase & Use Tax if prior to 6/26/97) on the ATV prior to the trade. If at the time of sale of the ATV, no other ATV (or other vehicle for which Sales & Use Tax is due) is purchased, you may not use the tax credit on a future purchase.
- ◆ If you trade your ATV for another ATV of equal value, no tax is due.
- ◆ If you buy an ATV from another person (private sale), no Sales & Use Tax is due.

## **Transfer of Ownership:**

- ◆ When you sell your registered ATV to another person, your registration plate and certificate expire and must be returned to the Department of Motor Vehicles, unless you buy another ATV.

- ♦ If you trade your ATV toward a new one, or sell your ATV to another person and buy a new one, you may transfer your registration plate to the new ATV. Enter the date of sale, and name and address of the person who bought your old ATV in the space provided on the current registration. Make out an application to register the new ATV, attach the current registration certificate and bill of sale, include the proper fees and mail to the Department of Motor Vehicles. You may operate the new ATV for 30 days with your registration plate attached without the registration certificate in your possession





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