Quad Deaths & Injuries Persist

The 2013 review of media reports involving quads compiled by the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety again highlights the dangers associated with their use. “Tragically, throughout the year there were 21 quad related deaths reported” indicated Centre Director Dr Tony Lower. “As was the case in 2012, this is above the 10-year average of 13 cases”.

Information indicates that 15 of the 21 deaths (71%), occurred on a farm. The type of incident was split evenly between rollover and non-rollover events. The fatal mix of kids and quads was also reflected by two cases involving children under 16 years, both of which occurred on farms.

“Not only is there a large number of deaths, there was also a further 78 injuries which were serious enough to result in press coverage. These are often life-changing incidents such as spinal and brain injuries” said Dr Lower.

“We know that this significantly under-estimates the true burden as a comprehensive study published in the Medical Journal of Australia in 2013 identified that that for each quad death there are approximately 40 hospital admissions plus at least a further 40 emergency department presentations. So we believe the non-fatal cases reported in the media are simply the tip of the ice-berg.”

“The impact of deaths and serious injuries from quads is significant and I am sure everyone would like to see a decrease in these incidents.”

“It is certainly pleasing to see recent steps being taken by some manufacturers to control risks associated with rollover events by improving vehicle design and others advocating for crush protection devices to be fitted” stated Lower.

“However, more needs to be done to enhance the safety of the estimated 220,000 quads already in operation across Australia, while at the same time there is a responsibility for operators to ensure the safe use of the vehicles. By addressing the design and safe use of quads in tandem, we can make a significant impact on these horrific statistics.”

Recommendations to reduce deaths and injury start with selecting the safest vehicle for the task that needs to be completed and in the majority of cases, this will not be a quad. However, given the high rate of rollover incidents, if a quad is still to be used, then a suitably tested crush protection device should be fitted. This is an increasingly common approach for many farmers and businesses that use quads and recognize their danger. Keeping children off quads of any size, not carrying passengers and wearing a helmet are also important preventive actions.

A copy of the report and other materials on quad safety is available from the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety www.aghealth.org.au or call 02 6752 8210 for further information.

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