

IDAHO BLM

LESSONS LEARNED

UTV TRAINING ACCIDENT

On June 12, 2015 at approximately 1500 two BLM fire and aviation employees who were participating in a training session for UTV and ATV operation were involved in an accident involving a UTV. The trainees were in a Polaris Ranger XP 900 one as the operator and the other as a passenger. They were participating in a segment of the training that consisted of a self-guided trail ride. The accident occurred when they crested a hill on the trail and on the other side of the hill they struck a rock. When they struck the rock it caused the UTV to become airborne and it came down on its front bumper on the downhill slope it caused it to rolled end over end onto its top and then back over onto its wheels where it came to rest. The trainees then checked with each other to make sure they were not injured and when they determined they were uninjured they got out of the UTV and inspected the damage. The roof, roll bar, bed, tail gate, bumper, and tail lights had incurred damage. The trainees used all the required personal protective equipment (PPE), had their safety nets in place, and were using seat belts. They determined the UTV was still safe to drive and drove it over to where the class was staging and then loaded and returned to their home unit. The passenger in the vehicle stated that he felt that if there had not been a roof over the roll bar that his hands may have been above the roll bar during the roll which could have led to injuries. The training session was an approved ATV Safety Institute (ASI) training with the BLM training component and was led by an ASI certified instructor. The training is designed to progressively build up skill sets starting with familiarization with the machines, various demonstrations, supervised drill, and then the final part of the training was the self-guided trail ride. The UTV was taken to an authorized repair shop and was inspected to see if any mechanical issues may have contributed to the accident. The inspection revealed no issues. The UTV had an annual inspection completed in April of 2015.

An after action review (AAR) was conducted on 6/18/2015 and some of the points identified during the AAR are listed below:

- There were various trails in the training area and no defined route was used.
- The operator of the UTV could not see what was on the other side of the hill until he crested the hill and at that time he could not avoid the rock.
- The passenger stated that he wasn't familiar with the heavier front end of the UTV and felt that contributed to the accident.
- The roll over protection system did its job and no injuries were incurred. The addition of the roof over the roll bar also prevented injury.
- The operator of the UTV is a first year employee, but, stated he has had experience on various equipment, before.
- The final trail ride was meant to give the trainees real life experience on the machines and was unsupervised. No parameters were set on speed or route. They were to try different types of terrain, use different gears, but not to exceed their comfort levels.

- Some concerns over the area being congested at time was identified which was considered a potential hazard.
- The operator and passenger estimated their speed at around 20 mph and was a contributing factor to the accident.
- No Risk Assessment Worksheet was completed
- No medical plan was in place
- A communication plan was not in place
- Management and dispatch notification of the accident was slow.

Lessons Learned:

- Assign group leaders using more experience operators to guide and oversee less experienced trainees.
- Ensure a risk assessment worksheet is completed and approved and all trainees are briefed before the training begins.
- Have a medical plan and communication plan in place, and the communication plan should include procedures for notifications if an accident does occur.
- Consider having medical personnel on site such as an EMT or EMR with trauma kit that are not participants.
- Look at setting up a supervised trail ride on a route with pre-identified hazards. These could be guided by group leaders or by the instructor.
- Currently there is only one qualified instructor for this training on this district. There is a need for more qualified instructors.
- Make sure that the training area does not get too congested and is large enough for the training.
- When unfamiliar with a given ATV or UTV, use a safe and prudent speed for conditions, especially when operating in unknown or unfamiliar terrain.
- Recommend installing roof covers on all UTVs.
- Develop a mentoring program for entry level employees to be paired up with qualified experienced employees to instruct and observe the entry level employee's skill level in a controlled environment before entering them into the training or certifying them.