

## Feature

# Legal road use for ATVs

Sophia Gallia highlights some important considerations for those using all-terrain cycles and sit-in ATVs on-road.

■ ALL-TERRAIN CYCLES (ATCs) ARE MOST appropriately described as Agricultural Motor Vehicles and, if used solely for agriculture, horticulture and forestry, is classified as a Light Agricultural Vehicle (LAV) and currently has a taxation rate of £40. If used only in connection with agriculture, horticulture or forestry, where road travel does not exceed 1.5km each trip between different parts of the farm, can be exempt in the Limited Use taxation class.

■ To be legal on the road ATCs need to have a complete set of lamps which comply with UK lighting regulations; a trailer electric socket; handlebar and footbrake switches; hazard, indicator, trailer indicator, and headlamp main beam lights; plugs and sockets for ATC wiring system; rear-view mirror and tax disc holder; and rubber-mounted lamps to reduce damage from vibration. Most are also fitted with speedometers.

■ Although not a legal requirement (except on three-wheelers, where the rear wheels are less than 460mm apart) drivers of ATCs and sit-in ATVs are recommended to wear an approved helmet.

■ As well as a helmet, operators are advised to wear ear defenders (where noise levels are high), safety boots, gloves, and non-slag outer clothing. They should also carry a First Aid Kit including large wound dressing and a fire extinguisher for ATV use.

■ ATCs and ATVs used on public roads must comply with Road Vehicle (Lighting Regulations) 1989 and the Road Vehicle (Construction & Use) Regulations 1986, but only if used during the hours of darkness or in adverse weather conditions. If lamps are fitted, they must be in good working order by day and night and must be used if visibility is poor. Vehicles are not considered fitted with lamps if lamps are painted, masked or not wired for use. Lights include: two white lamps at the front, dipped beam

headlamps, two rear red lamps at each side, hazard warning lights, rear reflectors on each side, direction indicators, rear registration lamp (where number plate is fitted), and rear red fog lamps.

■ If the view to the rear is obstructed, an off-side external mirror should be fitted (ATCs and ATVs).

■ All motor vehicles with four or more wheels having a maximum speed not exceeding 25mph must be fitted with and use an amber warning beacon when being driven on an unrestricted dual carriageway. This doesn't apply when towing a trailer fitted with a beacon or when crossing the dual carriageway in the most practicable way. When on other types of road, a beacon is discretionary.

■ When a vehicle is used on a road it must display proof of taxation and a registration mark. Trailers should be fitted with registration plates.

■ It is an offence to have tyres which are not maintained in condition fit for your vehicle's use, or which have a defect that could damage the road surface, other people on the vehicle or other road users. ATCs and ATVs are usually fitted with tyres designed for off-road use. Whatever tyres are used, the maximum speed limit is 20mph. Pneumatic cross-ply and radial construction tyres should not be on the same axle.

■ The minimum age for driving ATCs and ATVs on the road is 17 years, and requires a Category B driving licence (car). If the vehicle is three-wheeled and weighs less than 500kg unladen, a Category B1 (motor tricycle) licence will be sufficient.

■ Vehicles used on the public road must be insured for Third Party Risks (including those crossing roads, eg. from one field to another).

■ Trailers over 750kg must be equipped with brakes, which must kept in good order. They must be capable of being applied to at least two wheels and at least four wheels where the trailer has



more than four wheels. The trailer must also have a parking brake. The driver must be able to operate the brakes from the driving seat, while keeping control of the vehicle. Lights are only required on the trailer if used during the hours of darkness. If fitted, they must be clean and in good working order and used in reduced visibility. If used in darkness, trailers must have two rear red lamps on each side, rear number plate lamp, two rear reflectors and front position lamps on trailers over 1.6m.

■ It is an offence to deposit anything on a road which could cause an accident or interrupt use of the road by others. This includes mud.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

This article is to highlight legal road use. It should not be taken as the full legal position. Users of ATVs and ATCs should make themselves aware of their legal obligations.

A useful and more comprehensive note on legal road use for ATVs and ATCs is available at [www.forestry.gov.uk](http://www.forestry.gov.uk) entitled 'technote38\_98'.