UTILITY VEHICLES - CART & ATV SAFETY

By: Robert A. Wachter, P.E., CSP, UC Davis

According to the Consumer products Safety Commission, there are over 100,000 serious ATV injuries and over 15,000 golf cart related injuries in the U.S. each year. Follow the tips below to avoid and prevent injuries and accidents.

Pre-operation:
• Use a safety checklist (check the owner’s manual) and inspect vehicle prior to use
• Train all drivers and document the training
• Read and observe all warning labels in the cart or ATV
• Always wear seat belts when provided

Operation:
• Operate vehicles on the campus internal roadways, or designated routes, at an appropriate speed
• Observe all traffic laws and be safe and attentive
• Stay as far to the right as possible to avoid impeding traffic
• Use curb cuts for navigating from roadways to sidewalks or sidewalks to sidewalks
• Check blind spots before turning
• Pedestrians or bicyclists have the right of way. If the vehicle is being operated on a sidewalk, pull off the sidewalk or stop until approaching pedestrian or bicyclist passes

Turning:
• Due to the small size and limited visibility of the turn signals on a cart, use hand signals
• Avoid sharp turns at maximum speed, and drive straight up and down slopes to reduce the risk of passenger ejections and/or rollover. Avoid excessive speed, sudden starts, stops and fast turns.
• Driver must look over the shoulder in the direction of travel prior to the turn

Passengers:
• Do not exceed maximum occupancy limits
• Overloading a cart with passengers or cargo can cause an unsafe load on the cart
• Do not allow anyone to ride standing in the vehicle or on the back platform of the vehicle
• Do not put vehicle in motion until all passengers are safely seated inside vehicle

Parking:
• When parking, place gear lever in “neutral” position and firmly press the brake to engage the parking brake
• When leaving a utility vehicle or cart unattended, the vehicle must be taken out of gear and ignition must be turned off
• Do not leave keys in a cart while unattended
• Always park on pavement unless cart is specifically designed and used for ground maintenance
• Never park within 20’ of a buildings entrance or exit unless at loading dock
• Park in designated “Service Vehicle” or other designated parking when available
• Sidewalks, pedestrian or bicycle pathways must not be blocked when parking or stopping

Summary: Make sure you are training employees and following the owners operating manual safety and operational requirements. Check your individual campus policy and procedures regarding these vehicles and ensure everyone is informed and is complying with them as well as the safe procedures above. Ensure employees immediately report to supervisors any incident involving a utility vehicle, golf cart or ATV resulting in bodily injury, property damage or vehicular damage.