

United States Department of Agriculture  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

# Wildlife Services Directive

WS 4.155  
9/17/2021

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## OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLES

### 1. PURPOSE

This Directive establishes safety and training guidelines for the operation of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV). For the purpose of this Directive, OHVs include All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV), Utility Task Vehicles (UTV) also known as a Recreational Off-highway Vehicle (ROV) or Side by Side (SxS), and Snowmobiles.

### 2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This Directive replaces WS Directive 4.155, dated, April 4, 2009.

### 3. AUTHORITY

7 U.S.C. 8351 to 8353, and 16 U.S.C. 667, authorizes officers, agents, and employees of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Wildlife Services (WS) to conduct a program of wildlife services and to enter into agreements with states, local jurisdictions, individuals, and public and private agencies, organizations, and institutions for the purpose of conducting such services.

### 4. POLICY

- a. Each OHV operator must comply with federal, as well as applicable state, and local laws and regulations, including applicable state registration, licensing, and training requirements. Unless a written exemption is provided by the corresponding authority.
- b. WS personnel and collaborators conducting official duties must complete initial OHV training before operating OHVs following the Standard Operating Procedure: Off Highway Vehicle Training and Operations.
- c. OHVs owned or leased by the government are for official purposes only. WS personnel must obtain written authorization from their supervisor prior to using privately owned (hired) OHVs for official government purposes. Privately owned (hired) OHVs must meet the same requirements as a government owned or leased OHV. Privately owned (hired) OHVs use may be eligible for per diem based on the respective WS state or program area policy.
- d. Report all accidents involving OHVs immediately to the first line supervisor or other appropriate official, in accordance with current Department/Agency vehicle accident reporting requirements and procedures.

- e. Operators of OHVs must review and follow all operating, maintenance, and safety instructions included in the manufacturer owner's manual.
- f. Unless designed by the manufacturer to carry a passenger, ATVs and snowmobiles must not carry a passenger, except in emergencies.
- g. OHV operator, passengers, and cargo combined weight must not exceed the manufacturer's recommended weight limits, except in emergencies.
- h. When using a vehicle to transport an OHV, personnel must use a stable ramp with appropriate weight limits and ensure OHVs are securely fastened to prevent shifting.
- i. Loads carried on OHVs must be securely fastened.
- j. Firearm use from an OHV must follow the USDA APHIS WS Firearms Safety Training Manual and WS Directive 2.615 WS Firearm Use and Safety.
- k. When operating OHVs in remote areas, personnel must provide their supervisor or designee with their general locations of travel and expected return times; and carry a cell phone, VHF radio, Personal Locator Beacon (PLB), or equivalent communication or location-tracking device.
- l. A companion vehicle (i.e., the buddy system) is recommended when traveling in areas where cell phone or VHF radio service is uncertain and a PLB or location-tracking device is not available.
- m. Supervisors must ensure that all WS personnel and collaborators using OHVs complete training requirements in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedure: Off Highway Vehicle Training and Operations.

**5. SCOPE**

This Directive is applicable to all WS personnel and programs.

**6. REFERENCES**

- a. Marketing and Regulatory Programs Motor Vehicle Manual (MRP 5400)
- b. USDA APHIS WS Firearms Safety Training Manual
- c. WS Directive 2.615 WS Firearm Use and Safety
- d. Standard Operating Procedure: Off Highway Vehicle Training and Operations

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