

## GUIDE TO THE OUTDOORS FROM THE SHERIFF'S POSSE



*Spring is finally here and it is time to get the ATV ready to hit the trails. At left, Jim Neigherbauer and Jared Giegley get ready to ride near the Black Canyon. Above, Dave Fowler and Jerry Sieverson using their ATVs on a cool spring morning. Photos by author.*

By Mark Rackay

MONTROSE-With spring finally starting to make an appearance here on the Western Slope, it is time to start thinking about some outdoor activities. One of my favorite ways to spend a day is riding my ATV on one of the many trails we have in Montrose County.

It has been a long winter, and most likely, your machine has sat idle in a corner of the garage. An ATV is just like a car in that it requires preventative maintenance and routine service. It is a good idea to start the season with a fresh oil change and new plugs. I am always suspicious of batteries, so I generally start the season with a new one.

The State of Colorado requires all ATV's to have an OHV (Off Highway Vehicle) registration. Be sure yours is current as they expire March 31 each year. Check the Colorado Parks and Wildlife website at [www.cpw.state.co.us](http://www.cpw.state.co.us) for more information.

The night before my trip I always start with a visual inspection. Aside from the fluid levels, fuel, oil and coolant, I check everything over; making sure nothing is broken, loose or missing. I will make sure that the tires are also properly inflated.

Speaking of tires, don't go by the inflation numbers shown on the tire. Most ATVs require five pounds of air or less. Check with the owner's manual or your dealer to be sure. Too much air can cause a "ballooning effect" which can turn the

machine over, causing a serious accident.

Many of us have some type of boxes, bags or similar combination attached to our machines to carry extra supplies and gear in. I start out by taking out all of last year's snacks and candy bars and pitching them. Left over water bottles should be exchanged for fresh ones. Now is a good time to clean out any dust, mud or other debris that may have accumulated there from a season of riding.

I prefer the hard boxes rather than the soft canvas ones. They seem to hold the dust out better. I keep one box for the emergency equipment only. Here is a list of what I carry in mine: Water, enough for drinking during the day plus extra; First aid kit; Flashlight and extra batteries; Tow strap and a length of strong rope; Tool kit with tools fitted to your ATV; Tire repair kit with small compressor or CO2 fill kit; Extra warm clothes and rain poncho; Cell phone and GPS; Jumper cables; Leatherman tool; Roll of duct tape.

You can customize your kit to fit the needs of the trip being taken and whom you have along. If someone has special medicines, be sure to carry extra along in case you get stranded. I keep a small shovel and an axe strapped under the rear rack of my machine. You never know when you might get stuck in a leftover snowdrift or a mud hole. All of these items can be stowed away neatly and securely with a little practice with your own quad.

Before you go on your trip, take some time to study a map and familiarize yourself with the area. You might also find some places to stop and rest along the way that may provide something interesting or scenic to do. Stop by the BLM office, or the National Forest office and get some maps of the area. You will be amazed at just how many trails there are open to us. Be sure to tell someone where you are going and when to expect you to return. This person should be instructed to call the Sheriff's Office if you do not return by a given time. This simple step of preparedness has saved countless lives.

Remember that there are things that simply cannot be repaired on the trail. Because of this, it is most important to have at least one other person and quad along with you. Not only for safety but it is more fun to share a ride with friends.

When you ride, be careful and ride safely. Wear your helmets, gloves, eye protection and other safety gear. The posse responds to several ATV accidents every year. Most of the injuries we have seen could have been avoided if the rider had helmets and other gear. Summer is coming so ride safely and enjoy the outdoors.

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