

Riding Responsibly

Responsible off-road vehicle (ORV) riding can be safe, enjoyable, and can earn the respect of other recreationists. Irresponsible riding, however, can cause damage to human health, wildlife ecosystems, and can negatively affect the way others view ORVs. Riding irresponsibly can also increase expenses, as fines are being levied for illegal ORV use.

How does riding effect wildlife and the environment?

Riding off designated roads or trails, in wilderness areas, and in or through waterways can kill wildlife, damage fragile ecosystems, destroy vegetation, and can cause massive soil erosion. This can lead to increased water and air pollution, as well as cause displacement of wildlife from their habitat. Chasing or intentionally frightening animals can cause them to use excess energy that forces them to use valuable reserves needed to survive through hot summer and cold winter months.

Who else does riding effect?

The backcountry is used by hikers, bicyclists, equestrians, and off-road vehicle recreationists to enjoy the outdoors, solitude, and adventure. The area you ride in, and future visitors to it, can continue to be affected long after you've enjoyed the area. If left alone, the soils of undisturbed desert land naturally bind together forming a crust. This crust resists wind. When the soil is disturbed by activities, such as off-road riding, dust particles can become airborne more easily during future high wind events.

In addition, riding too close to residential or business areas creates a public nuisance due to the noise, disruption of serenity, vehicle emissions, and dust becoming airborne.

What can I do to ride responsibly?

- Stay on existing roads and trails.
- Cross streams only at designated spots.
- View livestock and wildlife from a distance.
- Do not ride in wilderness areas.
- Respect seasonal closures.
- Avoid revving your engine for no reason.
- Do not pursue wildlife or hunt from an ORV.
- Do not travel cross country, except for hunters picking up legally killed big game.
- Make sure your brakes, lights, spark arrester, and muffler are in good working order.
- Use four-stroke instead of two-stroke engines to reduce emissions and noise.
- Be courteous when passing hikers, campers, or horseback riders.
- When meeting a horseback rider, park at the side of the road and allow them to pass.
- Pack your trash out (pick up what others left behind, too).
- Leave the land in the same condition, or better than you found it.



Dust Control, Off-Road Vehicles, and Public Health

Off-road vehicle activity on dirt roads raises airborne dust (Particulate Matter, or PM) which can cause:

- Breathing difficulties;
- Respiratory pain;
- Reduced lung function;
- Weakened immune systems;
- Increased severity of acute bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, and emphysema;
- Heart attacks; and
- Premature death (by 1-8 years).

PM also reduces visibility which can be hazardous while driving, and interferes with beautiful scenic views.

What is Particulate Matter?

Particulate Matter, also called airborne dust, is one of the most significant air pollutants in Pima County. PM is made up of tiny particles (a fraction of the thickness of a human hair) that float in the air we breathe. The fine particles can pass through your body's defense system, travel into the deepest parts of your lungs, and cause damage.

What can riders do to reduce PM?

- Ride slowly on dirt roads.
- Avoid powdery, silty-soil areas.
- Keep from riding, or ride slowly, in residential or business areas.
- Respect fenced-off areas, private property, and areas posted with "No Trespassing" signs.
- Do not ride on storage piles at construction sites or other areas.