ATV Safety and Gear Fatality File



Farmer Dies Two Weeks After ATV Rollover

Frank hung in there “until the cows came home,” but in the end he couldn’t bargain with a blood clot.

The 66-year-old Wisconsin farmer died two weeks after his all-terrain vehicle (ATV) rolled on top of him during a fence-fixing project. The week he was going to be discharged from the hospital, he unexpectedly died when getting out of bed. The cause of death was respiratory failure due to a pulmonary embolism (blood clot).

The Investigation

According to the investigation, Frank had finished fixing a fence that was damaged by a windstorm. He was driving his ATV slowly down a hill when he tried to maneuver over a small tree growing out of a stump. Frank assumed the ATV’s tires would crush the tree, but they didn’t. Instead, the machine tipped over, causing him to fall down a 20-foot (six-meter) embankment. The ATV followed Frank down the hill and rolled on top of him, causing multiple injuries, including a cut on the head and broken ribs. He was not wearing a helmet.

Frank, who was described as very safety conscious, managed to survive the rollover but the blunt trauma he suffered was too much in the end.

The following recommendations were made after Frank’s death:

Farmers and other outdoor workers should conduct a thorough evaluation of the terrain to identify hazards prior to operating any offroad vehicle, including ATVs. Frank was aware of the terrain, but misjudged the impact that the small tree would have on the ATV.

Farmers (and other employers) should select an off-road utility vehicle equipped with a rollover protective structure (ROPS) and a seatbelt.

Operators of off-road utility vehicles should wear a helmet and follow the basic ATV Safety Code.