St. Mary's County
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
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## MEDIA RELEASE

July 13, 2009

**Public Service Announcement – Off-Road & All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Operations**

As the summer months progress and citizens continue to participate in outdoor activities, the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office receives an increase in complaints of persons illegally operating unregistered motorcycles, off-road and all-terrain vehicles on roadways within St. Mary's County. Off-road vehicles are defined as motorized vehicles intended for use on unpaved terrain and other off-road surfaces. Off-road vehicles include motorcycles. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are off-road vehicles designed to travel on four low-pressure tires; ATV's have a seat for the operator to sit or straddle, and handlebars for steering.

Sheriff Timothy Cameron would like to encourage responsible riding, and provide essential information to parents and persons who purchase and operate off-road vehicles. Maryland motor vehicle laws, including those laws which address the use and operation of off-road vehicles, are implemented to promote safety.

The Maryland Transportation Article prohibits the operation of an unregistered motor vehicle on a public roadway. The penalty for operating an unregistered motor vehicle on a public roadway is a $250.00 fine. Maryland Motor Vehicle Law also prohibits an uninsured motor vehicle from being operated on any roadway in this state. The penalty for operating an uninsured motor vehicle on a roadway is a fine of not more than $1,000.00 or imprisonment of not more than one year, or both. Any person who knowingly permits another person to operate an unregistered or uninsured motor vehicle on Maryland roadways can also be subject to charges and penalties. In addition, illegally-operated motorcycles, off-road vehicles and ATV's may be towed, which attach an additional expense.

ATV's may only be operated on private property with the permission of the property owner. Off-road and all-terrain vehicles may not be operated on:

- Public Roadways
- Bicycle Lanes
- Three Notch Road Bicycle Trail
- St. Mary's County Parks – unless in the designated ATV area of Chaptico Park
- Sidewalks
- Power Line Right-of-Ways

Sheriff Cameron encourages owners and operators to participate in ATV safety training, use appropriate safety equipment and to operate the vehicle within the law. Proper safety equipment includes a Department of Transportation-approved safety helmet, eye protection (goggles), gloves, and ankle boots.

The Sheriff would also like to offer the following safety tips:

1. Ride with a partner or a friend;

2. Let someone know where you are riding and when you are expected to return;

3. Familiarize yourself with the motor vehicle you are operating;

4. Operate in an ATV park, areas designed and/or designated for off-road vehicle operations;

5. Control the speed of the motor vehicle;

6. Do not operate in a careless, reckless or negligent manner.

For further information on the proper operation of off-road vehicles please contact Corporal Michael Peacher, Traffic Safety Coordinator for the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office at 301-475-4200 extension 1983.