

Girl's death on ATV raises safety issues

By Gary Rotstein
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The death of a 6-year-old North Fayette girl in an all-terrain vehicle accident over the weekend highlighted safety concerns raised by federal officials.

Ashley Tomko was a passenger Saturday on the four-wheel recreational vehicle driven by her mother's boyfriend, Robert Burgoyne, and she was not wearing a helmet, authorities said yesterday.

The ATV flipped when climbing a hill on the dirt roads of a former strip mine in the Santiago section of North Fayette near Burgoyne's home, where Tomko lived with her mother. Tomko died of chest injuries, an autopsy determined, and the accident remains under investigation by the North Fayette police.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends that no passengers be carried on ATVs and that all operators wear helmets. Since 1990, more than 1,000 people have been killed in ATV accidents, according to the commission.

Tomko would often ride as a passenger with Burgoyne and she usually wore her helmet, said Tim Burgoyne, Robert's nephew. He said he did not know why Tomko was not wearing a helmet Saturday. Tim Burgoyne said his uncle was hospitalized with a broken jaw and other injuries and did not recall details of the accident.

Tomko was the daughter of Margaret Popp and Gary Gill.

Visitation will be from 7 to 9 p.m. today, and noon to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. tomorrow at the Wharton-Herrick Funeral Home, 951 Cliff Mine Road, North Fayette. A Mass will be at 10 a.m. Wednesday at St. Columbkille Church, 103 Church Road in North Fayette, with burial in Resurrection Cemetery, Moon.

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