Horse Drawn Carriage & Wagon Ride Safety Guidelines

Driver

The driver should be the first to enter the carriage and the last to exit. The carriage or wagon should never be left unattended when hitched to horses.

The driver should always carry a whip. The horse should be accustomed to the whip and respond to its cues.

Driver should proceed slowly and cautiously and be prepared to stop at the passengers request at any time.

Horse

Use horses that are safe to be on the road. It is recommended that any horse which is to be used for the carriage of passengers should be at least 6 years old.

Check that the horse's teeth are comfortable with the bit, and that its shoes are secure and suitable for the conditions. Make sure the horse is content to stay a safe distance from others, and that it can be controlled in traffic and around other horses.

All horses should be healthy and fit for work. No horse should be used if it has any open sore or wound or if lame or has any other ailment.

Horses should be property shod and trimmed. If used on pavement horses should have rubber-coated heel pads or open steel barium tip shoes to aid in the prevention of slipping.

Horses should not be worked more than six hours in any twenty-four hour period.

Horses should be given water and rest for fifteen minutes each working hour.

Recommended: Horse blinders designed to prevent horses from becoming distracted.

Stallions should not be used for commercial carriage and wagon rides.

Vehicle

Check that all connections are secure, including the lights, brakes, hitch, and safety chains. Make sure all doors are closed. All carriage harnesses and traces shall be clean and in good working condition and shall be inspected for condition of worn leather, buckles, proper fit, and adjustment on the horse(s).

Be visible day and night at all angles by using lights and reflective tape.

Driving

All drivers should have extensive driving experience and be at least 18 years of age.

Passengers should only be loaded after horse(s) have been hitched to carriage or wagon.

Whenever traffic from the rear is unable to pass you because of a hill, curve, or oncoming traffic in the passing lane, be courteous and pull off to the side of the road when it is safe to do so and let other traffic pass.

Children should always be accompanied by an adult.

Passengers should remain seated while the carriage or wagon is in motion.

Maintenance Checklist

Check the harness and the carriage before traveling:

Drivers should ensure that all harnesses are properly fitted and appropriate for their particular use. Harnesses should also be regularly checked for soundness and safety.

- Line snaps
- Holdback straps
- Single trees and bolts
- Single tree straps
- Shaft eyes
- Brakes
- Slow moving vehicle emblem (Fanny flag)
- Battery
- Lights

Carriage Lighting Recommendations

Front Lighting

It is recommended that the from of the carriage be lighted.

Two white headlights on the front of the carriage no more than 3 inches from the edge of the carriage. You can tilt the headlights slightly downward so they don’t blind oncoming traffic.

Two amber flashing warning lights (one on each side of the carriage) no higher than 4 feet from the ground. The lights should be at least 4 inches in diameter. These lights are also the turn signals.

When a turn is signaled, the light indicating your turn will continue to flash and the other light will remain steady until you have completed the turn.

Reflective tape on the front of the carriage is also recommended to improve the visibility of the carriage.

Headlights

It is very important to use your headlights at all times dusk to dawn. Use your front lights:

- Between sunset and sunrise.
- During times of low visibility, such as rain, snow, fog, sleet, hail.
- When you cannot see at least 1,000 feet ahead of you.
- When you cannot see because of insufficient light on gray days.

Rear lighting

Two red flashing warning lights (one on each side of the carriage) no more than 4 feet from the ground. The lights should be at least 4 inches in diameter with 3 square inches of surface as required by state regulation. These lights are also the turn signals.

Reflectors and reflective tape are strongly recommended for marking the carriage.

Slow Moving Vehicle Emblems

Have a slow moving vehicle (SMV) emblem or fanny flag on the back of your carriage. The SMV emblem is required by some state laws to be displayed from 2-6 feet off the ground on the back of any vehicle traveling less than 25 mph. The SMV emblem is most effective when it is flat against the carriage and not tilting. The standard size of a SMV emblem is a 12-inch-high orange triangle with a 1 3/4 inches red border. The sign must cover an area of at least 72 square inches.

Reflectors are important for the side of the carriage. It is difficult for other drivers to tell what a carriage is from the side, especially at night.

Rear view mirror should be used allowing the driver to see at least 200 fee behind the carriage.

- When you are in heavy traffic and your vehicle may blend in. with the surroundings.
- When driving through posted work zones.