



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



HAYRIDES BEST PRACTICES

Hayrides are enjoyable activities where individuals of all ages can partake. While it is exciting to participate in seasonal events, safety must become a priority when using large equipment and motorized vehicles. Proper planning and attention to safety practices can help prevent an injury or tragic event from occurring.

When organizing a hayride, planning, and safety guidelines should focus on three key areas:

1. Riders
2. Driver
3. Towing Vehicle and Wagon

Establish safety rules for riders. Rules should include everyone's need to remain seated for the entire ride, and riders need to keep their hands, arms, and legs inside the wagon at all times. Take time to evaluate the wagon to determine how many people can ride in it safely. At a minimum, the wagon's size and capacity, the rider's weight, height, and age should all be taken into consideration when determining how many riders should be permitted to sit in the wagon while moving. Ensure all riders fit comfortably within the wagon's side rail enclosure, with ample room to remain comfortably seated throughout the ride. Other factors that need to be taken into consideration include:

Supervision - An adequate number of responsible adult monitors should be present in the wagon. An adult must accompany riders aged 12 and under. Educate riders on the safety rules by posting signs in the waiting area and the wagon. Before the ride starts, the monitor in the wagon should review the rules aloud. Rowdy conduct should be corrected immediately. The driver and monitor should be able to communicate with one another.

Equipment - Inspect the tow vehicle and wagon before opening each day to ensure both are in good repair. Document the inspection. Careful attention while conducting inspections should include but not be limited to missing parts, loose or missing boards, exposed nails/screws, or any other sharp edges that may cause cuts, scrapes, or wounds. A visual inspection of the tires on the tow vehicle and the wagon should be conducted before every ride. Tire inflation rates should be checked before the first ride of the day. It is recommended the ride operator confers with its solicitor regarding any requirements for ADA access. The wagon should be clean and equipped with sidewalls/rails that are high enough to prevent people from falling off the wagon when seated— usually 42" minimum in height. Sturdy side rails also offer back support for seated passengers. Loose hay should not be used. Two wagons should not be hitched together. Ensure the hitch attaching the tractor to the wagon is secured with a proper hitch pin and safety chains. The use of a chain as a secondary backup to connect the wagon to the towing vehicle is strongly recommended. The towing vehicle should be large enough to pull the loaded weight of the wagon safely.

Loading and Unloading of Passengers - Drivers need to ensure the pick-up and drop-off location is a safe distance away from the patrons who are waiting to ride on the wagon. The wagon loading and unloading area should have steps to assist riders as they enter and exit the wagon. Consider whether railings on the steps are desirable. Provide adequate lighting in waiting and loading areas. A monitor should be present to assist the riders onto and off of the wagon.

Driver - The driver should be experienced in driving the tow vehicle while pulling a wagon. Provide a list of safety precautions in the cab for the driver.

Route - The route should be selected in advance and fully inspected for hazards before the first ride of the day. The driver(s) should practice driving the route with the wagon before the hayride. Avoid the use of busy roads or roads that are too bumpy or have steep grades. Low speeds should be used at all times. Check for overhead wires that may interfere with the wagon, and determine whether an emergency vehicle would be able to travel the same path if necessary.

Seating - No rider should be seated in such a manner that any part of the body can extend past the sides, back, or front of the wagon. Riders should remain seated inside the wagon at all times. Riders' arms, heads, and legs must be kept inside the wagon.

Lighting and Visibility - Lighting is a critical safety factor for hayrides that occur at night. The tractor pulling the wagon should have the headlights on, the warning hazard lights on, and lights on the back that illuminate the wagon. Monitors riding on the wagon should have flashlights ready for use if needed. Using a public roadway for any portion of the trip is strongly discouraged. The tractor and wagon are farm vehicles, but in this case, they are being used to move passengers. Title 39 of the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Code may apply if farm vehicles are used to transport passengers on a roadway. If the route requires crossing a road, safety precautions must be taken. If the route is on any public roadway (for any portion of the trip), a trail car may be assigned to follow the wagon at a safe distance with its headlights on the wagon. We recommend you consult with your local law enforcement agency for assistance.

Parking Area - Parking areas should be kept separate so as not to cause any distraction or interference. Attention should be directed toward surface hazards and routinely monitored for deficiencies. Adequate illumination and signage should be present, which includes ingress and egress routes. Attendants must wear reflective parking vests and be equipped with flashlights and/or illuminated wands.

Communication - The driver, a monitor on the wagon, and the driver of the car following the wagon should use two-way radios or another form of direct communication to stay in contact with one another. The driver should have a spotter that can relay information as warranted, such as the need to stop. A cell phone should be available in case a need arises for emergency assistance.

Emergency Procedures - A first aid kit should be present along with individual(s) who are trained in rendering first aid. If an injury should occur, the person rendering first aid, along with the injured person, will need to determine if additional EMS Services need to be summoned to the scene. All injury incidents should be documented, and the event manager should be notified. Organizers should have a written emergency action plan in place. Drivers and monitors should carry cell phones for emergencies. The towing vehicle should be equipped with a fire extinguisher and flashlight.

Insurance and Liability Concerns - Consult with your solicitor and your Risk Management Consultants regarding insurance requirements and options.

Special Events - Public entities may contract for these services. The local authority should require that third-party contractors or groups organizing these activities complete an application or contract. Review the application or contact the local solicitor.

Special events have many benefits to the community. They also present many challenges. Overcoming these challenges starts with a good plan and organization. Involve all stakeholders early to minimize surprises.