



Hayrides

Many enjoy a hayride at camp or during church or school activities in Autumn. Unfortunately, serious injuries and deaths have occurred during hayrides. Riders have fallen from wagons and been run over. Vehicles have struck poorly lit wagons, and cars have struck participants walking behind wagons. Excess speeds and loss of control have also caused injuries.

Here are a few guidelines to follow to help minimize accidents and injury.

The Hayride Path

There are a few things to do before starting the hayride. Determine the road or path that the hayride will cover. Consider whether emergency vehicles will be able to access your location at any point on the hayride should the need arise. Inspect the path for potential hazards, including dangerous ruts, rocks, debris, low-hanging or dead overhead limbs, powerlines, and any other risks. Avoid use of public roads, and roads with steep hills and excessive curves. If a public road must be used, plan for escort vehicles with warning signage and four-way flashers to lead and follow the hay wagon that will alert traffic to the presence of the hayride taking place.

Consider how the roadway will be lit. If possible, mark private roads with low voltage or battery-operated lighting in dark areas and highlight curves. Do not use candles,

lanterns or other forms of lighting that are a fire hazard. Lights should also be used at the front and rear of the wagon during nighttime rides or when there is not clear visibility. Use light reflectors along the sides of the wagon.

Choosing Drivers

When choosing who will drive the hayrides, make sure to choose drivers who have experience with the type of vehicle that will be used (tractor, truck, horses, etc.). Remind drivers to follow the chosen path, and not to deviate from the carefully prepared and inspected route. Only the driver should be allowed in the tow vehicle unless there is additional seating provided by the manufacturer. Additionally, the driver should not exceed a speed of three miles per hour (a walking pace).

It is also important to include a rider as a chaperone in



addition to the driver to provide supervision of other riders and maintain safety throughout the ride. This chaperone rider should provide quality supervision, prevent horseplay, and make sure riders do not attempt to get on or off the wagon while it is in motion. They should also ensure riders remain seated throughout the ride.

Be sure the driver and chaperone are able to communicate clearly and effectively when needed.

Preparing the Wagon

Part of a safe hayride is having a safe wagon. Make sure to keep the tow vehicle and wagon properly maintained. The wagon should always be securely latched to the tow vehicle. Provide sideboards and end panels on your wagon to prevent participants from sliding off or being jolted off the wagon in the event it hits a pothole, rock, or other rough spot. Ensure gates and sideboards are properly secured before each ride. Before using a vehicle for hayrides, perform an inspection that includes checking the following items.

- Check tires, fuel, oil, draw bars, lights, brakes and hitch pins.
- Make sure the wagon has no loose boards, screws or splinters.
- Consider the use of a safety chain connecting the front axle of the wagon to the tractor.

- Make sure all tractors have proper lighting and markers. Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblems and appropriate lighting should be provided for both tractors and wagons.
- Make sure all tractors have a fire extinguisher, flashlight, first aid kit, and communication equipment.

Never use more than one wagon per tractor. The use of multiple wagons can lead to “snaking” which can cause sideswiping or overturning of wagons

Time for a Hayride

Before the ride, ensure all riders are fully aware of the safety rules. Keep riders away from tow-vehicles or horses at all times. Load and unload the wagon in a well-lit and safe location out of the way of any traffic and provide assistance as necessary for participants when boarding or offloading. Separate loading and unloading stations help to reduce confusion and the risk of injury. Load and unload one person at a time. During the ride, insist that riders keep their arms and legs inside the wagon to prevent injury from trees or brush. Never allow anyone in between the pulling vehicle and the wagon.

Hayrides can be fun, but they can also be tragic without adequate attention to safety. We must be mindful of the risks involved so we can prevent accidents from taking place.



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