

The Granite State Carriage Association

Driving Safety Tips

Driving horses in harness is a lot of fun and a great way to share them with other people. This safety sheet has been put together to help educate newcomers to the sport and to remind those of us who have been driving for a while what dictates safety. We, the Board of Directors of The Granite State Carriage Association, urge you to adhere to these recommendations to allow our sport to be as safe as we can make it.

MUSTS

- (1) Do NOT remove a bridle from a horse's head while the horse is hitched to its cart or carriage. Under NO circumstances is this safe or acceptable.
- (2) All horse driven vehicles must display a slow-moving vehicle sign when not on private property or in a state or national park.
- (3) Helmets should be worn while driving as they are just as much a safety feature as when riding. The wearing of helmets is strongly advised for everyone and is a MUST for those under 18 years of age.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Make sure that the horse is ready for the particular drive, i.e., that the horse is physically in condition for the length of the route and the hills that may be encountered on the route, that the horse has been introduced to and is comfortable with automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic, barking dogs, and as many other things as possible which may be encountered when driving.
- (2) Routinely check your harness completely for wear and missing or broken parts.
- (3) Routinely check your cart/carriage thoroughly for missing or loose bolts, cracked wood and its general condition. Make sure the wheel bearings get greased yearly.
- (4) A well-equipped spares kit on board will come in handy if you have equipment failure while out on a drive. A typical spares kit contains wrenches to fit all bolts, wire cutters, wire, hoof pick, baling twine, a pair of easy grip pruning shears (to cut harness), a sharp knife, a good hole punch, a rein splice, a trace splice, vise grips, duct tape, halter, lead rope, and whistle. A spare tube and tire pump is also recommended for those vehicles with pneumatic tires.

- (5) It is always a good idea to have someone stand at the horse's head and hold it, if necessary, while harnessing and hitching to the cart or carriage and this person should remain at the horse's head until the driver is seated in the cart or carriage, has picked up the reins and whip, and tells the person that they may step away.
- (6) Having a whip of sufficient length (to be able to touch the horse's shoulder with the whip) while driving will help to encourage the horse to move its feet if it is frightened, reluctant to move, or backing up when it shouldn't be.
- (7) Having a harness which includes breeching is strongly recommended on all GSCA drives, as one never knows when they may encounter really steep hills on which thimbles or wrap straps may not be sufficient to hold the cart or carriage back properly.
- (8) Use of a kicking strap is also recommended. A kicking strap greatly reduces the risk of a serious wreck and should be considered as cheap insurance. Of course, it is not like insurance at all; it is better because it prevents injury from happening.
- (9) If you and/or your horse are new to driving it is a good idea to have an experienced passenger with you while out on a drive.
- (10) When on a drive, should you meet a horse being ridden, you should come to a halt and ask permission to proceed. Never trot by without first asking permission. If a rider encounters a carriage and the rider's horse becomes frightened or agitated, the carriage should stop and allow the rider to pass. If the rider's horse continues to be agitated even though the carriage is stopped, the rider should be asked to move their horse as far off the roadway as possible in order to allow the carriage to proceed.
- (11) A horse that is hitched to a cart or carriage should NEVER be tied up and left unattended.
- (12) Every person attending a GSCA event MUST sign a Release of Liability form. This includes any passenger(s) you may pick up along your drive. If you do not have a release form with you, do NOT allow any other person to get in your cart or carriage. This is a requirement of the Association's insurance company.
- (13) As always, if you need help at a drive, please ask the drive manager for assistance.

Thank you for taking the time to review these guidelines for safe driving.