

Safety Reminders

Teamsters:

Generally, there will be a driver and a header on each vehicle. The driver is responsible for the safety of his animals and passengers. He must ensure that he is properly hitched and the vehicle is appropriate.

A header is a person who holds the horse quiet while drivers mount or dismount, or while horses are being hitched or un-hitched. He needs to be familiar with horses, harness and equipment. A header typically rides along and dismounts to assist whenever the vehicle stops. Headers may also assist with embarking and disembarking passengers, harnessing/unharnessing, grooming, feeding, watering etc.

Bridles and lines must be put on horses before they are engaged to a vehicle and are never to be removed until horses are totally disengaged from the vehicle. **Don't ever remove the bridle and lines from an equine while it is still hitched to a vehicle!!!** This is one of the most preventable causes of runaways.

As easy as it is to put the blame on someone else, it is ultimately the **driver's** responsibility to ensure he is properly hitched. Don't hitch or drive an animal alone unless you and your equine are both very experienced. Be sure that your helper is capable of helping. Get in the habit of working together.

Teams: Fasten your neck yoke and tongue before hooking your traces. When unhitching-unhook the traces, then your neck yoke and tongue. **Never** take the tongue off the neck yoke before unhooking the traces.

On single vehicles: Fasten your traces first and undo them last when hitching to and unhitching from a vehicle. If the animal is startled, you don't want the cart attached by a wrap strap with the traces undone; this can cause an awful wreck.

Don't ever leave an equine unattended while it is hitched to a vehicle. Always tie a horse while hitching and unhitching. If there is no place to tie up it is acceptable to have someone in the vehicle with the lines in their hands as you hitch or unhitch rather than just a header. Double check your turnout before moving off, to see that everything is fastened and adjusted correctly. Keep your harness and vehicle in good repair. Having a line, trace, girth, or wheel break while you are driving can be disastrous.

Make sure that your vehicle and harness fit and are suitable for your equine, and are properly adjusted. This is a matter of safety as well as comfort for you and your animal. Do not arrive at a scheduled drive with harness that you've never had on your animal before.

The driver is always the first and last person out of the wagon or carriage.

Do not allow people to stand in front of a horse hitched to a vehicle or in front of the vehicles wheels or runners.

Don't take on passengers, particularly children, unless you are sure that both they and your animal will be obedient. Passengers are not allowed to be seated in an unattended vehicle. Always pay attention and have a plan of where you can move to if something happens. As you are driving look ahead at where you are going and also glance back. Be relaxed but prepared at all times.

Do carry a whip at all times. It doesn't do any good in an emergency if it is in the socket or back at the trailer. A cell phone attached to you is another good emergency item to pack. Make sure your animals are accustomed with sounds of the phone.

All vehicles should have a slow moving vehicle sign on the rear of the carriage or wagon. Maintain (& bring along) a spares kit including halters, leads, and first aid kit for humans and horses.

Do not lead horse from ground while attached to vehicle. Remember you always have more control in the vehicle than out of it. Once hitched get in and stay in the vehicle. In case of emergency, if you find you have to get out, it is best to have a header. If not stay close to the horse and follow the lines to the bit and back again to re-enter the vehicle. Sometimes it can be difficult but allow yourself room between wagons. If the wagon in front of you breaks down, do you have room to get around or turn around?

Learn with a gentle, trained equine, if you are new to driving. The old adage, "green and green equals black and blue" is especially true for driving.

Safety Around Horses – “Common Horse Sense”

Fright means flight – Remember horses are creatures of flight. Their first instinct when surprised is to run away. They may go forward, backward, left or right and, if you're in the way, straight over you. Ouch!

Talk, don't stalk – Talk to a horse as you approach. It doesn't matter what you say, just keep talking. Tell her she's pretty or he's handsome, compliment her gait, or admire his saddle. Tell her how lucky her rider must be to have such a wonderful horse. Speak in a gentle voice.

Let me see, or I'll flee – Let the horse see you. Never approach directly from behind.

Ask my rider to stand beside her – Always ask the rider's or driver's permission before you approach a horse.

Do not race, I may chase – Do not race past a horse. She will assume you are frightened and may become frightened too.

If I dance, always glance – If a horse is dancing around, snorting, throwing its head back or swishing its tail, IT IS NERVOUS. Nervous horses may bolt, jump sideways or backup over you. Ouch! Keep your distance. Watch. A horse can cover 15 feet in a single stride.

Being nice will suffice – Most horses love people. And people love horses. Be nice to them and they will be nice to you.