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Keeping Your Passengers Safe on Hayrack Rides

During the fall season, hayrack rides are increasingly popular and can be a fun activity. However, the potential liability in transporting people on a ride pulled by a tractor is very high, thus hayrack ride safety is an important issue. Many accidents associated with hayrack rides can be eliminated by following simple safety precautions. Without the safety precautions in place, you have accidents waiting to happen. Many accidents are attributed to inadequate supervision and training and can be potentially dismembering and life-threatening.

Hayrack Rides That Have Turned Deadly

- September 2014, a man was killed when he fell attempting to jump from two connected hayracks.
- October 2014, a hayrack ride turned deadly when a jeep pulling a flatbed hayrack ride lost control, went down a hill, and hit a tree killing a teenage girl and injuring 22 others.
- July 2011, a tractor was used to pull an overloaded flatbed wagon. The wagon jackknifed and threw several occupants from the flatbed causing major disabling injuries.

Precautions to consider:

- Does the hayrack ride travel on a public road? If so, dealing with traffic and cars can become a serious issue. For the safety of all participants, it is recommended that if a public road is traveled, the local authorities are notified so the road can be closed off to traffic. If local authorities are not able to close off the public road, then it should be avoided.
- It is safest for the wagon to travel on a smooth, flat, well-traveled path.
- Ensure that emergency vehicles can easily access all areas of the path, if needed.
- The tractor should be equipped with a fire extinguisher, flashlight, first aid kit, and communication equipment. It is important that the driver have a way to communicate in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that there is adequate staff to assist in loading and unloading of participants and there is a safe manner to do so. No jumping onto or off of the wagon.
- All children must be accompanied by an adult, with a minimum of two adults on the hayrack ride.
- Tractor should never exceed more than 5 mph.

- Prepare participants in advance of safety rules when riding a hayrack ride:
 - No standing when the hayrack ride is moving
 - Keep arms and legs in the ride at all times
 - No laser pointers
 - No food or drinks on the ride
 - No horseplay on the ride
 - No climbing on waiting tractor
 - No smoking
 - No alcohol
- If hayrack ride is driven by a parishioner, the driver's auto insurance is considered primary.
- The individual driving the hayrack ride needs to understand that they have a liability exposure if anyone is injured during the hayrack ride and must follow the Diocesan Vehicle Safety Policy. Additionally, the driver must complete a Volunteer Driver form.
- Proof of auto insurance is required with a minimum coverage of \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per occurrence.
- There must be a written agreement indicating liability insurance and acknowledgement to follow safe practices between the driver and the parish.
- A motor vehicle record check (MVR) should be completed on the driver.
- Permission forms must be signed by parents for children under 18 years of age that will be participating on a hayrack ride.
- Ideally, a reputable vendor should be used that provides hayrack rides on a regular basis.
- Ensure that the maximum capacity of the wagon has been determined. This will help to prevent the wagon from jackknifing as well as help prevent control and stability problems.
- Ensure that wagon is equipped with side boards/rails to prevent someone from falling off the sides.
- A tractor should not be pulling more than one wagon at a time to prevent "snaking" that could lead to sideswiping or overturning of a wagon.
- Tractors used to pull a wagon must be in good working condition with documentation of regular maintenance.

By following these safety tips, you can ensure that everyone has a fun and enjoyable time on your next hayrack ride.

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM AND LIABILITY WAIVER FOR HAY RIDE

Participant's name: _____
Birth date: _____ Sex: _____
Parent/Guardian's name: _____
Home address: _____
Home phone : _____ Business phone: _____

I, _____ grant permission for my child, _____
Parent or guardian's name Child's name

to participate in this parish event that involves riding on a tractor while sitting on bales of hay. This activity will take place under the guidance and direction of parish employees and/or volunteers from _____.
Name of parish

A brief description of the activity follows:
Type of event: Hay Ride

As parent and/or legal guardian, I remain legally responsible for any personal actions taken by the above named minor ("participant").

I agree on behalf of myself, my child named herein, or our heirs, successors, and assigns, to hold harmless and defend _____, its officers, directors, employees and agents, and the Diocese of Houma Thibodaux, its employees and agents, chaperons, or representatives associated with the event, from any claim arising from or in connection with my child attending the event or in connection with any illness or injury (including death) or cost of medical treatment in connection therewith, and I agree to compensate the parish, its officers, directors and agents, and the Diocese of Houma Thibodaux, its employees and agents and chaperons, or representative associated with the event for reasonable attorney's fees and expenses which may incur in any action brought against them as a result of such injury or damage, unless such claim arises from the negligence of the parish/diocese.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

MEDICAL MATTERS: I hereby warrant that to the best of my knowledge, my child is in good health, capable of riding on a tractor bed that bounces and I assume all responsibility for the health of my child.