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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Amusement Ride Safety: Highlights of Program *Consumer Safety Tips and Ride Inspection Program Information*

Ohio is a Major Market for Amusement Rides

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (June 5, 2007) – The Ohio Department of Agriculture’s Division of Amusement Ride Safety works with ride operators and permanent parks to inspect and license the entertainment provided by this multi-million dollar industry. Ohio is home to a total of 2780 licensed rides found at 71 permanent amusement facilities, 51 go-kart tracks, and 309 portable ride companies. The division also licenses concession games at Ohio agricultural fairs.

Ride Safety Inspections

The division inspectors work to assure compliance with Ohio laws and rules covering all amusement rides in the state. Ohio is one of only three states in the nation with a full-time, year round ride safety division. The department inspects and licenses all rides before they are allowed to operate for the public, whether they are located at permanent parks, go-kart tracks, water parks, or portable ride company locations. While conducting annual pre-opening mechanical inspections, inspectors evaluate each ride’s structural integrity, hydraulic systems, brakes, tubs, sweeps, warning sign displays, and general ride operations. Inspections are conducted according to manufacturers’ specifications, which reflect standards established by the American Society of Testing and Materials.

During the season, the department also performs operational inspections of amusement rides to further protect consumers. Also, supplemental inspections are scheduled throughout the season on a need-to-inspect or random basis and can be unannounced.

Ohio amusement rides each bear a permanent brass numbered identification plate that serves as a perpetual license number. A dated sticker is applied each year to show that the ride is in compliance. Also, the department keeps records certifying each owner has met state-mandated insurance requirements. In the off-season, ride inspectors spend much of their time performing safety compliance audits of various sites and inspecting dismantled equipment.

Department Stresses Training for Ride Inspectors

The constantly expanding selection of more than 700 types of rides, available from more than 150 manufacturers, challenges inspectors to stay on top of industry trends. Experienced inspectors take part in safety seminars conducted by the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials and Amusement Industry Manufacturers and Suppliers. They also go through hands-on exercises with rides and ride manufacturers, and participate in internal training sessions during the off-season.

Consumers Must Abide by Ohio's Rider Responsibility Law

Ohio's ride inspection program, widely considered one of the best in the nation, works with the Advisory Council on Amusement Ride Safety to develop procedures to continually improve the efficiency of the program. One notable improvement is that Ohio was one of the first states to implement a Rider Responsibility Law in 1992. Within Ohio, an owner is required to display a sign beside each ride quoting the law: "Section 1711.551 of the Revised Code requires that riders must obey all warnings and directions regarding this ride and behave in a manner that will not cause or contribute to injury to themselves or others. Failure to comply is a misdemeanor." The law serves as a deterrent to dangerous horseplay by patrons, the major cause of amusement ride accidents. The majority of amusement ride injuries in Ohio are caused by human error unrelated to mechanical failure of the ride.

Consumer Tips to Prevent Amusement Ride Accidents

To help assure your children's safety – and your own – here are the top 10 precautions you can take before, during, and after the ride:

1. Assume an active role in determining whether a ride is appropriate for your child, especially if he or she is young.
2. Watch the ride in operation before you allow your children to ride.
3. Observe the ride operator.
4. Keep hands and feet inside at all times.
5. Sit down and hold on to safety restraints.
6. Obey the ride operator's instructions.
7. Make sure there is one adult chaperone for every two children.
8. Observe manufacturer's age, height, and weight restrictions.
9. Remain in the ride until it comes to a complete stop.
10. Stop riding before you get tired.

Consumers should promptly report any problems or concerns to the ride owner or operator; the amusement park or sponsoring organization; and the department's Division of Amusement Ride Safety.

How to Get More Information About Rider Safety

For more information, such as a free copy of the consumer brochure on amusement ride safety, consumers may call the department at 1-800-282-1955 or visit www.ohioagriculture.gov and click on "Regulatory Programs" and "Amusement Ride Safety Division."