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## **AMUSEMENT RIDES MUST MEET SAFETY STANDARDS**

(Salem) So you're at the county fair, where your twelve-year-old has just eaten a meal of popcorn, cotton candy and orange soda and now *really* wants to ride a huge machine that looks like a cross between a medieval catapult, a construction crane, and a blender. You know it's a recipe for motion sickness, but aside from that, how do you know if the thing is actually safe?

Oregon law requires an annual inspection and permit process before amusement rides in this state can be operated at amusement parks, county fairs and the state fair, and other summer festivals and similar events. Permits are issued by the state Building Codes Division, which also keeps permit records and inspection reports. BCD issues the permits when the ride operator provides proof of insurance and proof of inspection by an amusement ride inspector, who is typically an independent contractor authorized by the insurer.

The inspection process for these rides is complicated, because the inspector must have a broad understanding of many different codes and areas of technical expertise. Computer, electrical, mechanical, boiler, plumbing and even medical knowledge may be required in order to evaluate a ride's condition and ability to operate safely. In addition, the inspector must consider the specific design stress limitations of the ride and the physical stress limitations of the riders.

Ride owners must maintain detailed maintenance records for their rides, for review by the inspector. This allows inspectors to examine any major repairs or component failures that may have occurred between inspections to verify that any work done meets code provisions. The inspector then issues a report detailing any needed repairs. The report specifies whether the repairs must be completed before the ride can be operated or if they can wait until the ride is out of service during the winter season. If a ride is found to be hazardous or unsafe, the inspector can issue a stop order requiring corrections and a re-inspection before the ride is put back into service.

How can the public tell if a ride has been properly inspected? BCD won't issue an operating permit until the inspection report for that ride confirms that no defects considered dangerous to health or safety exist. The ride operator must then attach the permit to the ride in a location accessible and clearly visible to anyone wishing to see it. Permits must list the permit number, expiration date, name of ride, and model/serial number of the ride. In addition, permit colors change each year. For the 2000-2001 ride season, the permits are blue and gold.

The bottom line: Before boarding any amusement ride or allowing children to do so, check to see that the ride has a current permit posted. Anyone who sees a ride operating without a proper permit or has questions or complaints about a ride should call the Oregon Building Codes Division at 503-378-4133.

Oh, and maybe have the kids skip the orange soda!

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