

Sharing the Road with Horse-Drawn Buggies

With the growth of Amish communities across Maine, many motorists are seeing more horse-drawn buggies. While the concept of sharing the road with pedestrians and bicyclists is more common, sharing the road with horses requires enhanced courtesy, focus and safety awareness.



Horses may be unpredictable and are easily spooked by noisy exhaust pipes, horns, squealing brakes and other unexpected sounds. In addition, Amish buggies are not as expected or as visible as cars, trucks and bicyclists. This combination makes the buggies and their passengers quite vulnerable on public roads.



Tips for Motorists

- Slow down and pay attention when you see horse-drawn vehicle signs.
- Don't honk your horn near a horse! Nearly all horses are spooked by horns and it is against the law to knowingly frighten or startle an animal on a public way.
- Please don't rev your engine when pulling alongside a horse.
- Motorists are obligated by law to stop and remain stationary if anyone handling an animal signals that the animal is frightened. The motorist needs to wait as long as is reasonable and necessary, until the animal is calm enough to pass or move along.
- Dim your headlights when meeting or following a buggy at night, just as you would when meeting or following a car.
- Learn to recognize the reflector and lighting systems used on the front and rear of Amish vehicles. Dark buggies on dark nights are hard to see.



- Leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the buggy, especially if the buggy is stopped at an intersection. Horses get nervous at intersections and may back up. This unexpected move could damage the front of your car, and the buggy. More importantly, passengers in both vehicles could be injured.
- When passing a buggy, please allow at least three feet of space. If the horse is surprised, it could lurch the buggy into your path. If a car bumper catches a buggy wheel, it can flip the buggy, causing serious injuries to the passengers and the horse.
- Slow down when driving over a blind hill or around a sharp turn. If a buggy is nearby, your speed might make it impossible to avoid a collision.
- Buggies can travel faster than you think! Some can reach 18-20 mph. This is important to remember if you're passing a horse and buggy. Give yourself plenty of room to return safely to your lane if you're facing oncoming traffic, just as you would when passing a car.

Amish drivers also have responsibilities for driving safely and courteously. Always remember that many motorists are not expecting to see horses on the road so your visibility is crucial. Place reflectors on both the front and back of the buggy and use lanterns at night, keeping in mind the lanterns are not visible from every direction. Here are some suggestions for buggy or wagon drivers.

Tips for Amish Drivers

- Always be aware of vehicles approaching from behind.
- Please use hand signals.
- Cars need longer distances to stop, so don't pull out in front of a vehicle.
- When you're climbing a hill, be aware of what's behind you. Pull to the right and stop if traffic is closely approaching from behind. When you're over the crest, keep as far to the right as possible and allow the vehicles behind you to pass.
- When going around a blind curve, move along as quickly as is reasonable. Keep as far to the right as you can and allow cars to pass before and after navigating the curve.
- When turning left to enter a driveway or road, make sure that there are no vehicles behind you attempting to pass you on your left.
- When a vehicle in a driveway is about to enter the roadway, stop and wait. You may not be



visible to the driver, especially if the car is backing onto the road.

- When approaching an intersection at night, stop and wait for the other vehicle to enter the road. You may not be visible to the other driver.
- Be very cautious when meeting another horse-drawn buggy on the road. A car may be trying to pass the buggy coming toward you and that driver may not see you approaching them.





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