

# Sharing the Road Safely: Amish Horse Drawn Vehicles and Motor Vehicles, including Cars, Trucks, and Motorcycles



**Always stay alert, use caution and common sense when driving where horses, motor vehicles and pedestrians share the road.**

*This brochure was prepared by a cooperative effort of Amish leaders in Fort Fairfield and Easton, Maine and the Fort Fairfield Quality of Place Council. It is intended for educational purposes only.*

## INTRODUCTION

This brochure is intended to help Amish and motor vehicle drivers share the road safely by helping:

- Amish drivers, especially new drivers, learn the necessary precautions of driving on public roads – especially at night, and
- Motor vehicle drivers, especially those not familiar with horse drawn vehicles, learn how to recognize and avoid dangerous situations.

All drivers need to remember that horses are unpredictable and easily spooked by noisy exhaust pipes on cars, trucks, or motorcycles; loud noises from fields or parking lots; and other things that motor vehicle drivers might not consider.

Amish drivers should remember that they are not as visible to the motor vehicle driver as the motor vehicles are to them.

Following the guidance presented here may prevent serious accidents.



## MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVERS

Suggestions to make sharing the road with horse drawn vehicles safe for everyone: (Note: In this section, ‘buggy’ includes all horse drawn vehicles, ‘car’ includes all motorized vehicles)

- Do not blow your horn near a horse! Nearly all horses spook if a nearby vehicle's horn sounds.
- Do not rev your engine when pulling alongside a horse. The sudden, loud noise may spook the horse, causing it to suddenly move onto a hazardous shoulder or into the ditch causing damage and potentially injuring the horse and passengers.
- 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 system and lighting system used on the front and rear of Amish vehicles. Dark buggies on dark nights are hard to see.
- When behind a buggy that is stopped at an intersection, be sure to leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the buggy. Horses can get nervous at intersections and sometimes back up, which could result in damage to the front end of



your car and damage the buggy and injure passengers.

- Do not pass too close to a buggy, because if your vehicle or something from the shoulder of the road spooks the horse, the buggy could lurch into your vehicle or your path. State law requires three feet of separation. Horses also tend to meander some as they travel along so leave lots of room for passing safely. If a car bumper catches a buggy wheel it can flip the buggy causing serious damage to the buggy and injuring the occupants and horse.
- Pay attention to Share the Road signs and slow down when driving over a blind hill or around a sharp turn in the road as there may be a buggy on the other side of the hill or around the curve, making it difficult to avoid a collision at high speed.
- Buggies are traveling faster than you may think; some can reach speeds nearing 18-20 MPH. When passing a horse and buggy, remember that they may be slower, but they are still moving at a good clip, so be sure to 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

### Suggestions for Amish drivers:

- Recognize that many drivers are not familiar with seeing horse drawn vehicles on the road.
- Be aware always of what may be approaching from behind.
- Vehicles need longer distances to stop. Do not pull out into front of a vehicle.
- When you are crossing a blind hill be aware of what is behind you as you approach the top of the hill and pull to the right and stop if traffic is coming near you. When over the top of the hill keep as far to the right as possible and be aware of possible vehicles approaching from behind.
- When going around a blind curve use similar precautions as crossing a blind hill and move through the curve as quickly as reasonable.

When turning left to enter a driveway, side street, or field, make sure that no vehicle behind you is attempting to pass you on your left.



### Special suggestions for Amish drivers at night:

- Realize that your lanterns are not visible from all directions.
- Be sure that your buggy or wagon has both front and rear reflectors.
- Be aware that many other drivers may not recognize the reflectors used on your buggy or wagon.
- When approaching a driveway and a vehicle in the driveway is about to enter the roadway, stop and wait because you may not be visible to the driver. This is extremely important when the vehicle is backing onto the roadway.
- When approaching an intersection and headlights are visible, stop and wait for the vehicle to enter the road you are on because you may not be visible to the driver.
- Be extremely cautious when meeting another horse drawn vehicle when motor vehicles are present because a motor vehicle may be trying to pass the buggy or wagon coming toward you and the motor vehicle driver may not see you coming toward them.

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