

## Ride & Rider Safety Is Vital – A Message from Your Community Fair



Final preparations are underway for the Northwest Georgia Regional Fair in Calhoun, as volunteer organizers get ready for opening day on Friday September 9. In light of recent accidents at fairs and amusement parks across the country, the Northwest Georgia Regional Fair is ensuring they do everything they can to make safety a priority.

The carnival that provides rides at the Calhoun fair has no connections with any of the carnival providers involved with recent ride accidents. "We use a family owned and operated company based in Atlanta Georgia with a solid safety record. They have no affiliation with the carnival operators who were involved in recent accidents," states Bud Owens, President of the Northwest Georgia Regional Fair.

All of their equipment is inspected by the State of Georgia prior to opening each season. The State also inspects periodically throughout the year. Key staff members of the carnival are NAARSO (National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials) certified and complete a daily pre-opening inspection on all rides. The company holds weekly and often daily safety meetings to stress to employees the importance of safety.

After rides are erected at the Northwest Georgia Regional Fair, two full days will be dedicated to maintenance and to make sure that the rides are not only safe, performing correctly, but are clean and polished. Before operating each day, all of the rides are given a thorough inspection by the ride foreman and again by the operations manager. Each ride has its own individual inspection and maintenance sheet that must be followed and completed every day prior to opening. If any issues are found in the inspection and cannot be properly corrected prior to opening, the ride will not open until repaired, tested and a full inspection completed.

In addition to being inspected and maintained by trained personnel, their equipment undergoes various inspection programs involving non-destructive testing methods such as Ultra Sound, Magnaflux Particle and various x-ray testing of hidden components that structure the rides.

"The management team with the carnival will be held to a high standard while in Calhoun and will be undergoing a rigorous inspection process daily" states Ken Payne, Vice President of the local fair.

The Gordon County Fire Department inspectors and marshals also come out to inspect everything across the fairgrounds and provide recommendations to help the local volunteers assure a safe event. Our local environmental services inspectors also visit to help assure food safety and processes are being followed by the local churches and civic groups that provide food booths. Owens states "We will also have some great food provided by several established restaurants such as Williamson Brothers BBQ."

Owens also states "Carnival rides are typically inspected more often than amusement park rides because carnival rides are mobile. With my involvement as Area 1 Director of the Georgia Association of Fairs, I have a better understanding of the processes these carnivals should go through to assure safety and I hold our carnival provider to an even higher standard."

Rider awareness is also a crucial piece of the equation. Fair attendees should familiarize themselves with safety tips such as keeping arms and legs in the ride at all times, appropriate dress, staying secured, being alert and reporting anything that seems wrong.

Owens also states "Parents, adults, teens and children should be aware of their limits, whether it's something like a medical issue or if their child is afraid of heights. Never do anything that you know could harm you and follow all ride safety signs including height and weight guidelines. These signs are posted at the entrance to every ride"

The Northwest Georgia Regional Fair has posted a safety video on its website ([www.nwgafair.com](http://www.nwgafair.com)) produced by the Outdoor Amusement Business Association and encourages everyone to take a few minutes to watch and learn the importance of ride safety, rider responsibility and general safety at the fair.

The Northwest Georgia Regional Fair is a community association operated solely by local volunteers. The event profits go back into the community through prize monies, school and group donations, support for local charitable organizations and facility maintenance and upgrades. The goal of the local volunteer association is to provide an annual event which provides safe family fun, competitive youth opportunities and highlights our local and regional talent.