

What to do in an Emergency!

Carriage Driving Accidents

1. Stay calm. Getting upset is not going to help you think straight and will make the situation worse. If someone on the scene is hysterical, try to have them removed.
2. Assess the situation. Can you provide assistance without putting yourself in an unacceptable level of danger? Don't make yourself another person requiring rescue in the situation.
3. Make a quick plan to organize the rescue. This may take a few moments. If you are by yourself, you need to deal with it. If there is a group of people, there needs to be a leader. The person most likely to be in the position to lead is the one holding the horse's head. The leader at the head can see both sides of the horse better than anyone else and can call the shots.
4. Help the people first. People are ALWAYS more important than the animals. Let emergency personnel know that it is an equine-related accident, and to approach the scene quietly so as not to upset the horse(s) more. Once the people aided or stabilized, then the animals can be attended to.
5. Keep the bridle on the horse. You have no other way to control the animal otherwise.
6. Watch where the reins are. Many times, they can get wrapped up in a wheel. Cut the reins as long as possible (but only after heeding the following steps).
7. If the horse goes down, keep him down by holding his head down at the throatlatch, preferably from the "top" of the horse away from his legs, until he is released from the vehicle. Otherwise, he will try to escape with the vehicle attached. Don't let a half-hitched horse up. Make sure he is completely free of the vehicle before he is allowed up.
8. Make sure you have control of the horse before you release any pressure of tight straps. The horse may struggle with every strap loosened even if he is down first and "pinned". Sliding any straps under the horse may make him want to "leave", too. The leader should determine which straps should be loosened in what order as to cause the least amount of "flight" reaction from the horse.



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Some Steps to Release a Horse from a Vehicle

- Undo backstrap buckle
 - This one buckle releases both sides of the breeching plus the crupper.
- Undo Trace(s)
 - Undo from the singletree or the collar if they are buckle-in traces.
- Undo Neckstrap if the horse is down.
 - Unbuckling the neckstrap and trace on one side of the horse will remove the breastcollar assembly.
- On harnesses with “wrap straps”
 - Unbuckle the saddle of the horse if he is lying on his side.

Prevention or “Just in Case” Information

- In a runaway
 - Circle the horse, but don't make the circle too small that the vehicle tips over. Keep your head about you to be able to “get in your horse's head”. You need to “communicate” with your horse who is “out of his own mind”. Horses stop with their brains, not with their mouths.
- Get Snap Shackles for important places, and learn how to use them.
 - Arrange them “out” so that you can release them easily
 - Put small pieces of leather on the ring so you have something to grab.
 - Backstrap (can use “Jaw Lock” snap)
 - Singletree to traces
 - Pole straps to collar
- Take off any snaps on breeching straps.
 - They are a point of failure and can break a whole lot easier than the strap itself.
- Avoid harnesses with Conway buckles. They are hard to undo, especially in an emergency. Get a harness with “real” buckles.



Snap Shackle



Jaw Lock Snap



Breeching Snap



Conway Buckles

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