

May 12, 2005

Saferparks



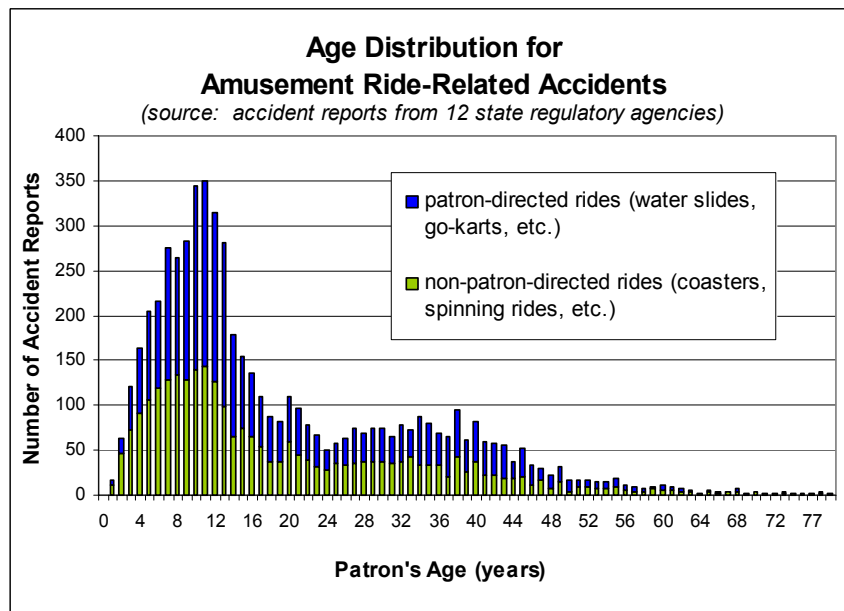
The Honorable Edward Markey
United States House of Representatives
2108 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: National Amusement Park Ride Safety Act

Dear Congressman Markey,

I am writing in support of the National Amusement Park Ride Safety Act, which would extend existing federal safety oversight of amusement rides to cover all rides operated in the United States. Saferparks is a non-profit California corporation dedicated to preventing amusement ride accidents by combining effective, common sense safety regulation with improved consumer access to information about known hazards.

Improving child safety standards for U.S. amusement rides is Saferparks' most urgent priority, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission is a key partner in that effort. Children are uniquely vulnerable to hazards associated with amusement ride machinery, including extremes of height, speed, acceleration, and exposure to moving parts.



A loophole added to the Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1981 made amusement park rides the only U.S. products marketed to children that are exempt from all federal safety oversight. It is simply indefensible for Congress to allow a special interest loophole of this

magnitude in an industry that serves up high-speed thrills to 300 million paying customers every year, especially when most of the resulting injuries accrue to children.

In 2004, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission conducted an in-depth investigation of carnival ride accidents related to restraint failure. The most common scenario involved restraints unexpectedly opening during the ride cycle. The second most common scenario involved riders slipping out of restraints. Of the accidents assigned to this category:

- 54% of the victims were under 5 years of age.
- 69% of the victims had cognitive development levels less than or equal to that of a typical 8-year-old (i.e., most were young children; two of the accidents involved mentally retarded older riders).
- Only 15% of the accidents in this category involved adults exhibiting deliberate thrill-seeking.

The CPSC human factors report contains a wealth of detailed information and analysis on this issue. Yet because of the 1981 loophole, the CPSC was prohibited by law from considering accidents on amusement park rides – those rides that generate the most extreme forces. Ironically, none of the fatal restraint failure accidents that occurred in the spring of 2004 could be considered in the CPSC’s research because those accidents all happened on rides operated at permanent amusement parks.

The 1981 loophole created an artificial division in public safety policy for amusement rides, and children are clearly paying the price. The patchwork of state and local regulatory agencies cannot replace what’s missing. *There is no public safety authority to track emerging hazards on amusement park rides or ensure that information on defects discovered in a ride in one state are shared with state or local regulators in every state.*

American parents count on the Consumer Product Safety Commission to help them safely use the thousands of different products marketed to children. Children who buy yo-yos, Barbie dolls, or a ticket on a carnival ride, are worthy of protection from product defects. So are children who buy a ticket to a Florida theme park or their neighborhood amusement arcade.

On behalf of Saferparks and the millions of parents who entrust their children’s lives to amusement park rides every year, thank you for re-introducing the National Amusement Park Ride Safety Act.

Sincerely,

Kathy Fackler
President