



NEWS

JB Pritzker, Governor

Michael D. Kleinik, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 19, 2021

Contact:

Mike Matulis 217-785-1719

Michael.Matulis@illinois.gov

Illinois Department of Labor Ride Inspectors Gear Up For Busy Season

From Six Flags to small town fairs, IDOL will conduct thousands of ride inspections this year

GURNEE -- With Six Flags Great America amusement park in Gurnee providing the perfect backdrop, Illinois Department of Labor Director (IDOL) Michael Kleinik reminded people this week of the department's role in keeping the public safe on amusement rides and attractions.

"Summer will be here soon, and as Illinois opens up, that means people will be flocking to carnivals, fairs and festivals. It's a time for great fun for the public and lots of work for the amusement ride safety inspectors of the Illinois Department of Labor," **said Kleinik**. "Our amusement ride inspections provide the public with the confidence to attend these fun events knowing the rides and attractions have been properly inspected."

Many people do not realize that ride inspection is part of the Illinois Department of Labor's mission, handled by the Amusement Ride and Attraction Safety division. Beginning in 1985, largely in response to some tragic and high-profile mishaps involving amusement rides elsewhere in the country, Illinois began regulating and inspecting all amusement rides and attractions that are open to the public. That includes everything from roller coasters to mobile climbing walls to bounce houses. IDOL also inspects haunted houses and other public attractions.

Each spring, Six Flags Great America is a major project for IDOL's ride inspectors. Six Flags is the largest venue inspected by IDOL.

"We spend the entire month of April to get the park inspected and open. And that is followed up with additional inspections in May as more of the rides are fully opened," **said IDOL's Chief Ride Inspector Tom Coe**.

The amusement park features 45 attractions, including 17 roller coasters. Coe said while a typical carnival ride may only require about an hour to inspect, some of the large roller coasters are much more complex and can take two to three days to complete the inspection. And ride inspections are only part of the job. The inspectors are also required to verify background check paperwork on each employee who operates the rides.

There are five full-time amusement ride safety inspectors for the state of Illinois. That relatively small cadre of inspectors is responsible for visiting the approximately 630 companies who operate various rides and amusement attractions throughout Illinois. They complete approximately 4,300 equipment inspections each year. That number does not include investigation and accident reports.

Besides the immense geographic area that must be covered, growth in the amusement industry also has created more work. Even the smallest festivals today offer a bounce house or two for kids to enjoy. Also, recently the department was charged with inspecting another area that is growing quickly – aerial adventure courses.

Whether it's a bounce house or the fastest and craziest ride on the midway, you should look for the permit-to-operate sticker issued by the Illinois Department of Labor to be assured the ride has been inspected. The permit, which will display the current year and the phrase "State of Illinois Permit to Operate," should be displayed in a conspicuous place.

If you determine no permit was issued or to report any accidents or unsafe conditions you observe with an amusement ride or attraction, please call the Illinois Department of Labor during business hours at 217-782-9347 or after hours at 217-299-5512. You can also submit a complaint online at the department's website at www2.illinois.gov/idol

While the Illinois Department of Labor is empowered to issue fines for failure to comply with the Amusement Ride and Attraction Safety Act, fines are not the goal. Safety is. Coe said most companies do a good job complying with the law.