



ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

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COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY

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NEWS RELEASE *for Immediate Release*

No. 2024 – 134

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Mind the Reins, Share the Lanes: Drive Safely Around Horses and Buggies

LEONARDTOWN, MD – Did you know that St. Mary's County is home to an Amish community of approximately 350 families? In honor of Amish Safety Day on August 1st, St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) reminds residents to slow down and be courteous when driving near Amish horses and buggies. Many people do not expect to see Amish buggies on the road, and they are not as visible as cars, trucks, and bicycles. These factors make them more vulnerable when on public roads. Accidents between a car and buggy can be serious and have often led to severe injury or death.

Chaptico and Mechanicsville are the primary areas of residence for the Amish community in St. Mary's County, Maryland. Highways which serve as major arteries for Amish horses and buggies are Thompson Corner Road (Maryland Route 236) and Budds Creek Road (Maryland Route 234). Amish buggies may also be seen on other St. Mary's County roads, including Point Lookout Road (Maryland Route 5) and near the St. Mary's and Charles County line.

Here are some tips for how to travel safely around Amish horses and buggies:

- **Take it slow** in areas where there is a high prevalence of Amish. The average horse and buggy only travels 15-20 miles per hour.
- **Give them room** by passing in the other lane whenever possible. Allow 20 feet between your vehicle and the horse before returning to the travel lane.
- **Do NOT use the horn or make any unexpected or loud noises.** Horses can be easily spooked, especially by loud noises such as a car horn, revving engine, noisy exhaust pipes, or squealing brakes. This can cause a safety hazard for the Amish horse and buggy operator, as well as the vehicle operator.
- **Do not stop to take photos.** While horses and buggies can be very interesting, it can be dangerous for the horse and the operator if you stop nearby for a photo-op, especially if stopping in front of or next to the horse.
- **Observe driving habits.** A horse and buggy is not the same as a motorized vehicle, and therefore will not behave as one. Buggies will drive as close to the right side of the road as possible but may move toward the center when making a turn. Most buggies do have turn signals.

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- **Leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the back of the buggy when stopped at an intersection.** A buggy may roll back slightly once stopped, or a horse may take a few steps backward. This could cause damage to the front of your vehicle if you are stopped too close.
- **Be alert for horses at night.** Most buggies utilize flashers during the day and night, but the horses may be harder to see at night.
- **Stop the car if the driver signals the horse is spooked** and wait as long as reasonable and necessary until the horse is calm enough to safely pass.

For information regarding the SMCG, please visit: <http://stmaryscountymd.gov>.

Follow SMCG on social media for regular updates at <https://x.com/StMarysCoGov> and <https://facebook.com/StMarysCountyGovernment>.

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