

Chapter 21

SAFETY – the mainstay of Pony Club

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Did you know that USPC was the first equine organization to require members to wear safety helmets? USPC has a committee dedicated solely to promoting and overseeing safe practices for riding and working with horses. They are charged with educating both children and their parents in accident avoidance.

Safety Notes for the DC



TIP: The USPC Safety Committee has produced the Pony Club Safety Information Packet, and the USPC Horse Management Handbook is an excellent source of information about safety in Pony Club. The Pony Club Safety Information Packet and USPC Horse Management Handbook are available on the USPC Web site.

From time to time, additional information will come from the Safety Committee and the National Office. Watch *USPC News* and the DCDigest for more information and replace and/or add pages as necessary to this section.

Please read the safety sections in the *USPC Manual of Horsemanship, D and C Levels*. In addition, many of the chapters in both Manuals contain important information on safe practices around horses as part of the chapter content.

Encourage your Pony Club members to read their Manual and practice safe work habits around horses by being knowledgeable yourself and by insisting that instructors place a value on safety in their teaching and by their example.

Preparing for Emergencies

The following are presented as guidelines for an appropriate response during medical emergencies that may arise during Pony Club meetings. Remember that it is the responsibility of those in charge to modify these suggestions to best suit the activity, severity of injury, and the resources available.

The **USPC Medical Release Form** must be properly and thoroughly completed *annually*, and it must be available for all types of activities regardless of their nature, e.g., camping trip, trail ride, unmounted meeting, etc. **Copies of each member's form should be in a file that is brought to each Pony Club activity.** It is of particular importance that you identify special information regarding allergies and/or medications. These forms must be properly signed by parents or legal guardians, because many hospitals will not initiate treatment without informed consent. Without this, long delays may be encountered for treatment of relatively minor injuries.



REMEMBER: Completion of a Medical Release Form is a requirement for membership in USPC. However, do NOT send the release to the National Office! YOU need to have it on hand for emergencies.

Before any Pony Club meeting, a **Safety Information/Accident Sheet** should be completed and available to those in charge. This form should contain information pertinent to the quick response to any emergency that may be encountered during meetings, i.e., EMS, police, fire. For activities involving large numbers of Pony Club members (such as a camp), the Emergency Medical Service should be alerted to the day and time of the activity, and recommendations should be made for the best means of emergency contact, i.e., radio, telephone, other.

At least **two adults should be present** at all mounted activities, e.g., the instructor and a parent or club officer. This will insure that one adult can go for help, if needed, while the other remains in charge.

While there are no requirements that instructors be **certified in First Aid**, it is greatly encouraged that someone who attends club activities is certified and maintains current certification.

In Case of Emergency

The use of trained Emergency Services personnel has greatly reduced the response time from the occurrence of the accident to initial evaluation and treatment. Moreover, injuries that are relatively minor can be significantly complicated by well-meaning, yet incompetent, individuals wishing only to help.

The most important function that laypersons can serve is to make the injured person comfortable. Provide a blanket for warmth and shade from direct sun. Protect the individual from further injury, e.g., stop or direct traffic if the rider falls in a ride, control heavy bleeding by pressure, remove from a creek or pond.

If a head or back injury is suspected, DO NOT move the person, but wait for trained medical personnel. However, if the injured person is lying on his/her face and breathing is compromised, roll him/her over carefully, keeping the head and the body as a unit.

Most importantly, remain calm, use common sense, and provide strong emotional support.

Incident Management Plan

Developing a plan for incident management is a good idea for every club. This allows a club and its members to have guidelines of what to do in case of an emergency or other undesirable situations.

Since each club and region is unique, each should adopt an incident management plan (IMP) to suit its own circumstances.

Elements in the IMP:

- ▶ Assign someone in your club to draft the IMP. If meetings are held at different sites, establish an incident plan for each site. Ask to see the regional IMP.
- ▶ Plan for the types of unpredictable disasters or tragedies that seem most likely in your region. Thunderstorms? Flash floods? Stealing tack from the site?
- ▶ The method to call emergency responders at each site and the phone number should be written down. In some areas the local fire department or Red Cross are the responders. In other areas, there are other mechanisms.
- ▶ Prepare a map showing the routes from the site to the trauma center.
- ▶ If cellular phones or beepers would be used in an incident, list numbers with the names of those who have them and their role in the incident team.
- ▶ Prepare a card with general information, which is to be kept with the DC during meetings. Give copies to key people (RS, Jt-DC(s), and the club working board) at the beginning of each year.

Member Abuse/Molestation

DCs should report ANY allegations of abuse/molestation, harassment, or illegal actions of a member to the local authorities for them to investigate. USPC is not in a position to undertake such investigations in-house.

State Warnings

The National Office recommends that local clubs and regions that have state warnings about equine activities (as of the date of this publishing 44 states have warnings) display the applicable warning(s) at each Pony Club mounted meeting. The warning your state uses should be printed on a sign with lettering of at least one inch and in black ink. Most state and local Horse Councils have these warning signs available at a nominal cost.

The state warning should also be included on show bills and entry forms for horse shows, rallies, hunter paces and other equine events. If your club encompasses more than one state, be certain to use the warning for the state in which the activity takes place.