



Ankin Law Office LLC

Protecting the Rights of Injured Workers

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Amusement Park Safety

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[Amusement park ride accidents](#) can cause serious injuries or even death. If the rides are not adequately maintained or the safety rules in place are not followed, serious accidents can occur. In fact, according to [RideAccidents.com](#), there have been 17 reported accidents stemming from amusement park rides thus far in 2011.

A recent BuffaloNews.com [article](#) describes a few of the accidents that occurred just this summer:

* James Hackemer, an Army veteran from Gowanda who lost his legs and left hip to a roadside bomb in Iraq, died after falling out of Darien Lake Theme Park Resort's Ride of Steel coaster in July.

* A month earlier, an 11-year-old girl fell to her death from the Ferris wheel at an amusement park in Wildwood, N.J.

* (In August), five people were hurt when the center mast snapped on the 30-year-old Sea Dragon swinging-ship ride at the same New Jersey park.

Unfortunately, in most states, there is very little oversight as to how the rides are set up, operated and maintained. Although the Consumer Products Safety Commission regulates the manufacturing of amusement park rides, the states, not the federal government, are tasked with the duty of deciding how much regulation is needed, if any. And, the amount and degree of regulation varies widely, as explained in this USA Today [article](#):

24 states, including California and [New York](#), ha(ve) comprehensive government inspection and accident investigation programs.

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Eleven states, including Oregon and Washington, ha(ve) minimum inspection and insurance requirements and leave oversight to the private sector.

Nine states ha(ve) partial oversight. And six states — Alabama, Mississippi, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming — ha(ve) no regulations on amusement rides.

Another emerging issue is the dangers presented by the increasingly popular inflatable rides, such as bounce houses. Over the summer there were reports of at least 10 incidents where bounce house or inflatable amusement rides were toppled by strong winds or were caused to collapse under the weight of too many children. In many cases, the cause of the accident was determined to be the failure to follow safety guidelines when setting up and operating the temporary rides.

Obviously, safety is a major issue when it comes to amusement park rides. Many believe that more strict safety regulations are needed. But until that happens, the burden is on the amusement park patron to keep an eye out for signs of inadequate maintenance or the failure to follow proper safety procedures. Unfortunately, for now, it seems that for amusement park patrons, the prevailing mantra is “user beware.”

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