

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 22, 2009

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Illinois Department of Labor provides tips for safe summer fun at amusement parks, street festivals and carnivals

Department conducts inspections throughout the year to ensure rides and attractions meet safety standards

CHICAGO -- With summer just around the corner and millions of people expected to make their way to popular amusement parks, festivals, street fairs and carnivals across the state, the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) is offering tips on how to stay safe while enjoying amusement rides and attractions. IDOL is responsible for inspecting rides and attractions that are open to the public -- before they are permitted to operate -- to ensure that they meet safety requirements and are operated according to manufacturers' standards.

"Illinois families can enjoy carnivals, amusement parks and neighborhood fairs this summer, knowing that our trained inspectors work tirelessly to inspect thousands of amusement rides and attractions throughout the year," said IDOL Director Catherine Shannon.

IDOL enforces the Carnival and Amusement Rides Safety Act to regulate amusement rides and attractions in Illinois. It inspects nearly 5,000 rides each year at stationary parks, go-kart tracks, inflatable jump facilities, traveling carnivals and fairs that are open to the public to ensure they meet safety standards. Once the inspections are completed, IDOL issues permits for mechanical rides, inflatable attractions, carousels, trains, trams, ski lifts, rope tows, go-kart tracks, dry slides, mobile climbing walls and power trampolines.

IDOL is offering the following guidelines to help families, event organizers and fair-goers stay safe while having fun:

- Amusement rides or attractions should not be operated for public use without a current (2009) permit sticker issued by IDOL. Make sure every ride and attraction has a permit sticker affixed to it. View a copy of the Department's permit at www.state.il.us/agency/idol.

- Read and follow all posted rules and observe age, height and weight restrictions – their purpose is to keep you safe.
- Follow all instructions given to you by the ride operator.
- Walk – do not run – near or around rides.
- Use safety equipment, such as seat belts, shoulder harnesses and lap bars when provided.
- Remain seated and keep head, hands, arms and feet inside the ride at all times.
- Do not assume a ride is safe for small children if you hold on to them.
- Talk to your children so they know what to expect of the ride.
- If a child or friend is afraid of the ride, never force them to ride.
- Stay seated in the ride until it comes to a full and complete stop.
- Observe the ride in operation before riding it. If something looks wrong, don't ride it.
- Report unsafe conditions, accidents or rides without state permits to appropriate authorities, including the Illinois Department of Labor.

To further protect children who attend amusement parks, festivals, street fairs and carnivals across the state, Illinois enacted legislation in 2007 that prohibits convicted sex offenders and others convicted of violent crimes from operating rides and attractions, and requires owners and operators to conduct criminal background checks on operators prior to hiring them. The law also requires owners to implement a substance-abuse policy for operators, which includes random drug testing.

Anyone who operates amusement rides or amusement attractions that are open to the public -- without having obtained the required 2009 State of Illinois permit from IDOL -- is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor and may face fines of up to \$2,500. To report someone who is operating rides or attractions without a state permit, please contact local law enforcement immediately and IDOL at 217-782-9347.