

# Thrill-ride accidents spark new demands for regulation

By KATHLEEN FOODY, ERIK SCHELZIG and CLAIRE GALOFARO  
Associated Press



AP Photo/Rogelio V. Solis

**Amusement device inspector Avery Wheelock inspects the safety pins on a children's merry-go-round at the Mississippi State Fair in Jackson, Miss. In some parts of the U.S., the thrill rides that hurl kids upside down, whirl them around or send them shooting down slides are checked out by state inspectors before customers climb on. But in other places, they are not required to get the once-over.**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In some parts of the U.S., the thrill rides that hurl kids upside down, whirl them around or send them shooting down slides are checked out by state inspectors before customers climb on. But in other places, they are not required to get the once-over.

The grisly death of a 10-year-old boy on a Kansas water slide and a Ferris wheel accident that injured three little girls at a county fair in Tennessee this summer have focused attention on what safety experts say is an alarming truth about amusement rides: How closely they are regulated varies greatly from state to state.

"Fifty states in the United States of America and no two inspect rides the same way.

That's wrong," said Ken Martin, an amusement park safety consultant who has been one of the loudest critics of the nation's patchwork of state

laws. "We're not close to being in the same book, state to state. We're not even on the same page of the hymnal. We certainly aren't singing in key."

Twenty-nine deaths on amusement rides or water slides have been reported to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission since 2010, spokeswoman Patty Davis said.

The amusement park industry has successfully lobbied against federal oversight for decades, and the CPSC doesn't regulate rides at permanent parks like the one in Kansas. It oversees only traveling carnival rides, like the Ferris wheel that broke in Tennessee. Even then, federal investigators don't conduct routine inspections; they respond only after accidents.

So whether a ride has to be inspected before thrill-seekers hop on depends on what state it's in.

Six states — Mississippi, Alabama, Nevada, South Dakota, Wyoming and Utah — have no laws at all that require inspections, according to Safetyparks, a nonprofit group that

pushes to improve safety. In most cases, the ride operators' insurance companies require only annual inspections, Martin said, and the insurers set the criteria.

Kansas and Tennessee are among the many states that have light regulation. Kansas mandates annual inspections but allows a park to perform its own, using private, licensed inspectors. The state does random audits of the paperwork.

Tennessee follows a similar self-inspection protocol. The state relies on private inspectors hired by operators or accepts inspections conducted on traveling rides in other states.

On the other end, New Jersey is considered one of the toughest for its cadre of state-trained inspectors and engineers who routinely inspect rides. Pennsylvania, likewise, has a rigorous system that includes more than 1,000

state-trained inspectors.

Martin and others say the federal government should operate something equivalent to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, which protects workers on the job. He says the government has a duty to set uniform standards for rides, such as mandatory inspections and training protocols for inspectors.

But David Mandt, a spokesman for the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, a trade group, said that injuries are rare and that a federal program of inspectors would cost taxpayers millions.

"We believe strong local and state regulation is the most effective government oversight for the industry," he said in an email. "The states need the flexibility to create and enforce laws relevant to the attractions in their state, and that's what they have done."

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**ACROSS**  
1 Blue shelter birds  
5 — Beta Kappa  
8 Wild guess  
12 Farm-related  
14 Infamous emperor  
15 Military dining area?  
16 Aware of words  
17 That girl  
18 Name derived from a person  
20 Does nothing  
23 Actress Penelope  
24 Floral rings  
25 Satisfied  
28 Director Spike  
29 Ram  
30 Biblical boat

**DOWN**  
11 Pros-perous period  
13 Numbered  
19 Plunks (down)  
20 Unwell  
21 Profound  
22 Stead  
23 Piggy bank items  
25 Slapstick missile  
26 Houston acronym  
27 Arduous journey  
29 Suit to —  
31 Crucial  
33 False  
34 Foot part in Paris  
37 "Zounds!"  
38 Foolproof  
39 Decorate  
40 Cinch  
43 Mag. staff  
44 CBS logo  
45 Refusals  
46 Boy king

**Solution time: 21 mins.**

C	O	I	N	T	A	O	S	Z	A	P	
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D	O	R	E	M	I	C	A	E	S	A	R
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**Saturday's answer 8-22**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13				14			
15							16			
		17				18	19			
20	21	22				23				
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28				29				30	31	
	32	33						34		
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37	38	39				40				
41				42	43			44	45	46
47				48						
49				50				51		

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Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Use logic and process elimination to solve the puzzle. The difficulty level ranges from Bronze (easiest) to Silver to Gold (hardest).

Rating: BRONZE  
Solution to 8/20/16

1	7			2		4	5	8
	5		9	7	4	3		2
	9			8	2	7		
5			4					6
	6	1	5			4		
9		7	4	3	6		8	
3	1	6		8			2	4

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