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"Safety is always important"

As a police officer, I have seen enough horse related accidents to make a lasting impression. My hope is that this series of safety articles will help you keep safe as you enjoy your horse.

Why is safety important? It's important because no one intends to have an accident. And it can happen to you. Accidents can range from merely inconvenient, smashed toe to the unthinkable and tragic death. Having a safety conscience attitude can prevent injury to you and your horse.

When do accidents happen? Most often, they occur when we are in a hurry, tired, preoccupied or taking shortcuts. In police work we call this level of awareness, "level white". It is when we are preoccupied and unaware. And we all agree it's dangerous.

In today's world it seems our lives are overwhelmingly busy. When is the last time you were in the barn and preoccupied in thought? How closely were you paying attention to signs your horse was giving you and alert to potential hazards? We need to be alert and aware of our surroundings. This is "level yellow". Your attention focused on your horse and your safety.

Make horse safety a habit. It's like wearing a seatbelt. Maybe it's uncomfortable at first and it takes extra time and effort to put on. But when the unexpected accident happens, you'll be glad you did. Avoid potential problems before they happen. Be careful, anticipate problems and ask for help when you need it. Become a knowledgeable horse person and don't take short cuts with your safety.





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This safety series will include articles on:

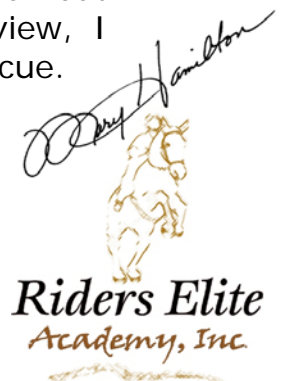
- farm and stable safety
- ground handling safety
- tack and safety equipment
- safety on the horse
- trail riding safety
- road riding and traffic safety
- transportation safety
- theft prevention
- what to do in an emergency
- show and clinic safety
- selecting a safe stable and riding instructor

I will conclude each article with a police story sharing a real life horse experience.

I was introduced to mounted law enforcement on a hot, humid summer afternoon. I received a radio call of a domestic argument at a busy beach. Being a new "rookie" officer, I had visions of resolving the argument in short order. I located a very large and sunburned man wearing a Speedo bathing suit. Clearly intoxicated, the man was yelling at the top of his lungs at his wife. He didn't want to leave, but she thought it was best that she take him home.

Using my best police tactics, I tried to reason with him. It didn't take long for him to decide he liked me even less than he liked his wife at that moment. He yelled, "I'm not going anywhere". And he laid spread eagle on top of a picnic table, holding on with a white knuckle grip.

I needed help and I called for back-up. Who should answer the call but Officer J. P. on his police horse Rocky. As they loped into view, I sighed with relief. It was as if the cavalry was coming to my rescue.





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Now, I knew J.P. never dismounted at a call so I wondered, "How was he going to help?"

I quickly explained the situation to J.P. and suggested we needed four more burly cops and a Mack truck with a winch to pry this guy from the picnic table. Being a man of few words, J.P. said simply, "I'll handle it".

He rode up to the picnic table and strategically placed Rocky's muzzle over the man's bare belly. Rocky was always a horse prone to slobber. We all watched in silence, mesmerized as he licked and smacked and chewed. Drool started to accumulate on Rocky's chin. Well, you can imagine what it looked like. Just as it was about to drip on to the man's stomach, he rolled off the table and said, "I'm out of here"!

Oh, the sweet glory of mounted patrol, acquiescence with the power of a horse.

