

Ohio's New Buggy Lighting Kit Makes Roads Safer

SHREVE, Ohio — At first Daniel Weaver did not see the need for consistent lighting on buggies. After all, most buggies are equipped with lights. That should be enough.

Then, one night, Weaver's friend was crossing state Route 39. He had his buggy lights on, but an out-of-town motorist did not see him until it was too late. Weaver's friend was broadsided

and critically injured.

"Not all accidents can be avoided, but many can be prevented with proper lighting," said Weaver, an Amishman who operates D.W. Safety Lights near Shreve, Ohio.

Weaver is the distributor for a new lighting system kit designed for buggies. The system was unveiled Feb. 19 at Weaver's business. It includes an improved tri-

angular Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) sign and retroreflective tape that marks buggies and makes them more visible at night.

The kit is based on a similar one introduced for farm machinery last year that has become a national standard. The SMV sign is visible at 1,200 feet, twice the distance of old signs. It also is made of materials that last twice as long

as former ones.

The retroreflective tape, changed from orange on farm machinery to silver for buggies, increases visibility on the roadways. The silver color approaches a more conservative style preferred by the Amish.

Research for improving the sign and lighting system was conducted at Ohio State University by Tom Bean, safety leader.

"We have the largest Amish population in the country here in Ohio," Bean said. "This is an effort to assist them in becoming safer on the roads." Of the estimated 150,000 Amish in the United States and Canada, about 42,000 live in Ohio.

In 1995, Ohio saw more than 125 road accidents involving horse-drawn vehicles. From 1990 to 1993, there were more than 500 accidents with three peak accident times. About 21 percent of the accidents occurred from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.; 18 percent from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.; and 29 percent from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

The kit is being manufactured by SMV Technologies in Odessa, Fla., a company that also manufactures one of the kits for farm machinery. "I lived in Pennsylvania for a while and became aware of the safety problem for buggies," said Betty Thorp, president of the company. "We think it will

eliminate a risk and address some of the concerns of the Amish community."

The kit is not just for Amish. It is designed for use by any horse-drawn buggy, including carriages.

Dean Slates, agriculture and natural resources agent for Ohio State University Extension in Holmes County, said the new kits will be accepted by many, but not all, members of the Amish community. "Most are very interested in maximum visibility at night, but they don't want materials that are as visible during the day." However, he does not expect Swartzen-truber Amish, the most conservative of the sect, to accept the new technology.

To Weaver, his friend's accident drove home the point that motorists need to know how to identify a buggy on the road. Only a consistent lighting system could achieve that and let drivers know they are approaching a vehicle that is traveling 20 miles per hour or slower.

Weaver also offers reflective leg bands for horses and belts for riders, and other equipment to keep people safe at night.

"A large percentage of the Amish see a need for safety, and most motorists respect horse and buggies. They want to be able to see them at a distance. This kit will help," Weaver said.

Vineyard Walk-Around July 30

The association of wine grape growers in southeastern Pennsylvania (SEGA) has announced a Summer Vineyard Walk-Around for Thursday, July 30.

The program will begin at the Stone Barn Restaurant in Unionville at 9 a.m. and feature leading wine grape experts, including Dr. Andrew Reynolds from Brock University in Ontario, Dr. Barbara Goulart from Penn State, and Dr. Toy Wolf from Virginia. The discus-

sions will deal with vineyard characteristics that produce premium wines.

After a tasting of wines from Mica Ridge Vineyard, a cold buffet luncheon will be served. After lunch, Mica Ridge Vineyard's manager, Ike Kerschner, will conduct a tour of the vineyard. This is a unique opportunity to see established, mature vines trained to TK2T, and various forms of Scott Henry and Smart Dyson vertical training systems. He will also

discuss cropping histories, equipment for narrow rows, cropping in the second year, and management tips for vertically divided canopies.

Varieties in the vineyard include cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, merlot, dolcetto, carmine, viognier, pinot gris, petit verdot and sauvignon blanc, all grown in commercial quantities.

Reservations received by July 15 are \$40 for SEGA members and \$50 for non-members — after July 15, \$50 and \$60 respectively. Call or write Fred Maki, French Creek Ridge Vineyards, 200 Grove Road, Elverson, PA 19520, (610) 286-7754. Checks should be made payable to SEGA.



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