

# KNOW THE RULES...

## For Child Safety in AMUSEMENT OR THEME PARKS



**F**amily outings are occasions that may be wonderful times for bonding and spending quality time together. And family outings to amusement and theme parks may be special times that leave children with lifelong memories of "meeting" their favorite cartoon character or having their own "real-life" action adventure. It's a "family-favorite" vacation enjoyed by millions each year.<sup>1</sup>

As a parent or guardian, you know such outings may also be sources of stress and concern for family members visiting an area with so many new sights and sounds. It's easy for both adults and children to become distracted by all the excitement and attractions. Taking the time to plan your trip and including your children in that process will help make your outing in the park a more enjoyable one from start to finish. Here are a few steps your family may take to help ensure those happy memories.

### Before going to the park, tell your children . . .

- To enjoy their outing while paying careful attention to where they are and who they are with at all times.
- They should not be alone in the park or become isolated with anyone, even characters in costume. Also tell them not to accept any prizes, offers, or gifts from anyone until they have **checked first** with you. Children should also be cautioned not to engage in conversation with or offer assistance to anyone until they have checked with you first.
- To **tell** you if anyone approaches them or makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused. Tell your children if they are approached by anyone who tries to take them away to yell, "**This person is not my father (mother)!**"
- If you become separated while in the park to go to the closest "Help/Information Center" to ask the people there to "find my parents/guardians and bring them to me here at this Center" or, in the case of older children, make the "Help/Information Center" the spot where you are able to "meet up." Make sure your children understand they should never search for you on their own or look for you outside the park, especially in the parking lot.
  - These rules also apply when they are taking part in a field trip through their school or youth group. And if you are not joining them for that trip, they need to check first with and tell the responsible adult in charge or a designated chaperone if anything makes them feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused.



### As a parent you should . . .

- Get information about the park prior to your trip, and review the park guidelines, particularly those regarding lost children. Discuss the information as a family, including what to do if you become separated. Ask your children what they would do in certain situations, and practice appropriate actions and responses with your children.

- Get a map of the park prior to the visit or immediately upon arriving, identify the "Help/Information Centers" throughout, and reinforce the idea that these are the places for children to go to in case you become separated in the park. Making a plan beforehand, of what to do in case you are separated, should greatly speed a reunion.
- Talk to your children about who is able to help them if they become lost, need assistance, or are in trouble. Examples of these people may be park personnel with nametags or mothers with children. Children should never go off alone with anyone.
- **Not** allow your children to wear clothing or carry items on which their names are displayed.
- Make sure your children carry some form of identification and family/emergency contact information with them in case they become separated from you or need assistance.
- Consider dressing your children in or asking them to wear brightly colored clothes so they may be more easily spotted in the park.
- Accompany young children on rides in the park. Older children should stay in groups and **take a friend** with them wherever they go in the park. If you decide to let young children go on rides without you, wait with them in line, watch them enter the ride, and immediately meet them when they exit the ride.
- Always accompany younger children to restrooms in the park. Older children should not go to the restroom alone.
- Immediately report any suspicious or inappropriate behavior to authorities.
- If you have a cellular telephone or pager, make certain your children know those numbers and these devices are activated so your children may call you if they become lost. Based on your children's ages and maturity levels, make certain they also know how to reach you if separated by asking adults you have identified to help them make the call or using a pay telephone they locate in a safe area. Parents and guardians may wish to use two-way radios while in the park, so family members can stay in touch with each other.
- Immediately report your children as being missing if you become separated in the park, and be prepared to give an accurate and detailed description of your children. You should carry a current photograph and be able to accurately describe the clothing the children are wearing.
- Make certain there is going to be qualified supervision of the children by responsible adults, if you are considering granting permission for your children to take part in a field trip to an amusement or theme park.

<sup>1</sup> As published in *U.S. Amusement Park Attendance & Revenue History*, by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions, in 2006 an estimated 335 million people attended approximately 400 parks and attractions in the United States, [www.iaapa.org/pressroom/Amusement\\_Park\\_Attendance\\_Revenue\\_History.aps](http://www.iaapa.org/pressroom/Amusement_Park_Attendance_Revenue_History.aps), accessed June 18, 2008, citing *Amusement Business*, Harrison Price Company, Economic Research Associates, TEA/ERA Global Theme Park Attendance Report, U.S. Census Bureau, Price Waterhouse Coopers, and International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions as sources of these numbers.



**1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678)**

**[www.missingkids.com](http://www.missingkids.com)**

Copyright © 2000 National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). All rights reserved.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2007-MC-CX-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® and 1-800-THE-LOST® are registered service marks of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. NCMEC Order #33.