

Palmetto Carriage Works (PCW)

Media Kit: Frequently Asked Questions

Palmetto Carriage Works (PCW):

How many animals are currently under the PCW care?

The Palmetto Carriage “herd” is made up of 35 mules, 20 horses, two goats, and six chickens. The “Big Red Barn” in downtown Charleston comfortably holds up to 28 animals in large box stalls.

Are visitors allowed to drop by and check on the animals outside of the carriage tours?

The barn is always open to guests, though PCW urges respect for the animals and asks patrons to follow strict safety guidelines to keep the animals and guests safe.

Are visitors allowed to pet the animals?

In most cases, yes, but with supervision. Each animal is different, just like us, so it is always best to ask the driver or staff first before touching an animal. Safety is first for everyone in the barn- visitors, staff and the animals.

What are the qualifications to work for PCW as a carriage driver?

All employees who at any time operate a carriage must have a valid driver’s license, and while operating a carriage, must carry it at all times. Drivers are also required to have a tour guide license and must comply with Charleston Municipal Code Chapter 29, Article III, TOUR GUIDES.

Is there any official training involved?

Palmetto Carriage Works (PCW) takes a very serious approach to driver safety training and daily carriage operation. Part of the formal company policy, which has been in place since 2013 is that new tour guides/drivers go through a formal training program.

What is involved in the training program that makes a driver qualified to safely and professionally run a tour?

The training program includes an hour long informational session on driving the carriages, safely controlling a carriage animal, preventative steps to avoid potential hazards, and general procedures for safe carriage operation. In addition, drivers are required to have at least 20 hours of supervised driving time before they are allowed to drive on their own. Once this has been completed, drivers attend a thorough review of a comprehensive safety checklist and a clear understanding of the PCW employee manual.

How often are the carriage drivers trained?

The formal safety training program during orientation is required before any new carriage driver is allowed to give a tour on their own. The safety protocol also requires that new hires attend a harness class led by operations manager, Ben Doyle, which is also offered as a refresher class for current employees each month, and that tour guides attend a comprehensive safety meeting once a year led by general manager, Tommy Doyle.

What are some regular safety protocols PCW has in place to maintain a safe environment for the work animals and community?

There are specific steps PCW drivers take each day to ensure the safe operation of their carriage. Palmetto Carriage managers hold a daily safety meeting before rides begin to go over any road blocks, detours or construction areas to be aware of and try to avoid. Then as they get ready for tours they must fill out and sign a check sheet to make sure all parts of the carriage and harnesses are in good working order.

What are some things PCW does on a regular basis to avoid potential hazardous situations or anything that could cause harm and ultimately, a dangerous situation?

The safety of the customers, tour guides and animals is always the first priority for PCW. On a regular basis, Tommy Doyle, general manager, drives the route in the mornings to scan for potential disturbances, hazards or road blocks. He then communicates this to his drivers at the daily morning safety meetings. PCW also regularly communicates with the City of Charleston for updates on events, construction, road blocks or potential issues that could interfere with the carriage tours.

How many accidents in a year, on average, does the carriage industry in Charleston see?

Based on the number of carriage rides offered each year in downtown Charleston, the chance of an accident occurring during a ride is less than one in 12,000. This is based on statistics from The City of Charleston, who is “partnered” and closely monitors the welfare of the animals, alongside PCW and other caring, concerned horse carriage companies and partners, like the City of Charleston.

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