OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, event operations. Article

Rides at winter events: when riders make the ride unsafe

Swings collided on a fair ride in Georgia, three people went to hospital from a fair in Rotherham, and how to brief, watch and stop the rides at your winter event



A person raises one arm towards a moving chair swing ride at night.
OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

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OTAS Live Ltd.

SUMMARY

Rider conduct is a foreseeable risk. Plan who warns, who stops the ride and who takes over when a ride goes wrong.

3

people hurt when swings collided on a fair ride in Georgia, USA, on 7 November [1]

3

people, aged 11, 13 and 21, taken to hospital from a fair in Rotherham in September [3]

2.5 m

the height below which HSE says swing out areas over the public may need enclosing [9]

ACTION

Before your winter event opens, agree with each ride controller how riders are briefed, who can stop the ride, and what happens in the first ten minutes after an incident.

By OTAS Insights. Edited by Kris Dailly. Correct as of 9 November 2026.



A person raises a hand to a chair swing ride at night. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

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01
Read this first

Sources: 23 public sources opened on 9 November 2026. They are news reports from WRDW, CBS via Local 12, BBC News, Greatest Hits Radio, WBRZ and WAFB, HSE guidance HSG175 and six HSE web pages, ADIPS, NAFLIC, the Showmen's Guild, the Purple Guide, a district council and Scottish licensing law. Children were involved in all three cases. We do not name them or show them, and no image in this Insight shows a child. We describe events and ride operators rather than naming them in the text. Some source links carry names. Facts carry a source number. Where a cause is claimed, we say who claimed it. Everything without a source number is OTAS guidance for event professionals.

On Saturday 7 November a chair swing ride at a county fair in Georgia, USA, became unstable as it slowed and the swings collided [1]. The sheriff's office said two 13 year olds had held on to each other's seats after staff told them not to [1][2]. A woman left by ambulance and two children were treated for minor injuries [1]. A parent said other parents ran to the control panel to help slow the ride [1]. The two teenagers were charged and released to their parents [2]. In September three people, aged 11, 13 and 21, were taken to hospital from a fair in Rotherham, South Yorkshire, and the fair closed early [3]. The cause has not been made public [3][4]. This Insight is for organisers who bring rides into a winter event. It covers what UK guidance expects, how to brief riders and staff, when to stop a ride, and what to do in the first ten minutes after something goes wrong.

> **In short:** rider conduct is a risk you can plan for. Check each ride before it arrives, give riders the rules in the queue and at the gate, make sure the operator can see the whole ride and is expected to stop it, and agree who takes charge after an incident.

Five things to take away

01	HSE guidance says riders ignoring safety instructions can be foreseeable misuse. Plan for it.
02	Check every ride before it opens: a current inspection record, insurance and a named controller.
03	Give the rules three times: on a sign, on the PA and from the attendant at the gate.
04	The operator must see the whole ride, and be expected to stop it. Nobody else touches the controls.
05	Agree before you open who takes charge, who calls 999 and who keeps the ride closed after an incident.

ACTION

Read the case, then share the actions with your team.



02

What was reported

Three reports, from Georgia, Rotherham and Louisiana [1][3][6]. Children were involved in all three. We do not name them. We describe events and ride operators rather than naming them in the text. Some source links carry names. Where a cause is claimed, we say who claimed it.

A person stands by the fence of a lit chair swing ride at night. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Georgia, USA, 7 November

Where	A chair swing ride at a county fall fair in Grovetown, Georgia, on a Saturday [1]. The fair runs until 15 November [1].
What deputies said	The sheriff's office said two 13 year olds held on to each other's seats while the ride was moving, after staff had warned them not to [1][2]. Video shared online shows the ride becoming unstable as it slowed, and the swings colliding [1].
Injuries	A woman was taken away by ambulance and two children were treated for minor injuries, according to a local station [1]. CBS reported three people with minor injuries [2].
At the controls	A parent told a local station that other parents rushed to the control panel to help her husband slow the ride, and that she did not see much urgency from law enforcement or EMS [1].
Afterwards	The two teenagers were charged with being unruly and released to their parents [2]. The reports do not mention any check of the ride afterwards [1][2].

Rotherham, 11 September

Where	A fair in Maltby, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, on a Friday evening [3].
What happened	The ambulance service was called at about 18:50 and sent two ambulances and three rapid response vehicles. Three people, aged 11, 13 and 21, were taken to hospital [3].
On the night	The fair closed early. A nearby road was closed so that people could leave the site safely [3][4].
Afterwards	The next day the two children were stable in hospital and the woman had minor injuries [3]. The authorities said they were investigating, and that checks would be made across the fair's equipment [4]. The cause has not been made public.

Louisiana, USA, 1 November 2025

Where	A Ferris wheel at a harvest festival in New Roads, Louisiana [5].
What investigators said	Two girls fell from a wheel tub [5]. The state fire marshal said the tub door was open while the wheel turned, caught on part of the structure and tipped the tub [6]. The wheel had passed its yearly inspection [6].
The question of who opened the door	Documents released later show the ride company believed the riders opened the door. Investigators could not prove that [7]. Reports differ on how many girls fell, and from what height [5][8].

Afterwards	Both girls went home to recover [5]. The fire marshal stopped three wheels from operating in the state and set out changes to how rides are inspected [6]. Louisiana lawmakers are now considering tougher inspection rules, and lawsuits are under way [8].

	As reported
Georgia	Swings collided as the ride slowed. Deputies said two teenagers held each other's seats after warnings [1][2]
Rotherham	Three people taken to hospital, fair closed early, cause not public [3][4]
Louisiana	Tub door open in motion. How it opened was not proved [6][7]
Injuries reported	Georgia minor, plus one person by ambulance [1]. Rotherham two children stable, one adult minor [3]. Louisiana serious [5]
Ride status after	Rotherham equipment checks [4]. Louisiana three wheels stopped [6]

Table 1. Three ride incidents, as reported. WRDW [1], CBS [2], BBC News [3], Greatest Hits Radio [4], WBRZ [5][6], WAFB [7][8].

ACTION

Ask your team: if a rider ignored the attendant on your busiest ride, who would stop the ride, and how fast?

03

What these cases do and do not show

Facts and judgement are kept apart here. The facts carry source numbers. The rest is OTAS guidance.

	What is reported	What is not known
Georgia	Deputies said riders held each other's seats after warnings [1][2]	Whether the ride was checked afterwards, and why it was not stopped sooner [1][2]
Rotherham	Three people went to hospital, the fair closed early [3]	The cause, and what the checks found [4]
Louisiana	A tub door was open while the wheel turned [6]	How the door opened. The rider claim was not proved [7]

Table 3. Facts and open questions in the three cases. Facts from [1][2][3][4][6][7].

The lesson for organisers does not depend on the cause. In each case people were hurt on a ride at a public event, and the people around the ride had to act in the first minutes. Planning for rider conduct, for a fault and for the response is the same job.

ACTION

Read these three cases with each ride controller, and ask what their staff would have done.

04

The paperwork to collect before build up

Collect these for every ride before it arrives on site. Sources shown. A DOC is the Declaration of Operational Compliance from a registered inspection body.

Document	What to check
DOC	Current, for this ride, checked online by its ADIPS number. Paper is not proof. Normally valid for 12 months [17][18]
Insurance	Public liability insurance for the controller. One council asks for at least £5 million [21]
Risk assessment	For this ride on your site, including rider conduct and bad weather [9][21]
Rider rules	Height, age and conduct rules, and the signs and PA words that give them [9]
Emergency arrangements	How riders are got off the ride if it stops, including at height (paras 302 and 303) [9]
Named controller	Who is in charge of the ride on site, and how to reach them [9]

Table 4. Paperwork for each ride. Sources shown. Not a full list. Ask your council what it needs.

Ride inspectors who work under ADIPS are registered with it, and NAFLIC is a trade association for them [17][22]. Trade bodies such as the Showmen's Guild set safety rules for their members [19]. The Purple Guide recommends using ride operators who are experienced, insured and trained [20].

ACTION

Make a folder for each ride, and do not confirm a ride until the folder is complete.



05

Why winter events raise the stakes

In Georgia, parents reached the control panel [1]. In Rotherham, a road was closed to let people leave [3]. The rest of this section is OTAS guidance, drawing on HSE.

A queue waits behind a barrier under a lit big wheel. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

From a rule to a stopped ride

1	2	3	4	5
Rules given	Rider warned	Ride stopped	Rider removed	Logged and reported

The step most often missed is stopping the ride once the warning has been ignored. OTAS guidance, drawing on HSG175 paras 285, 286 and 321 [9].

Groups of teenagers

Winter events draw groups of young people after school and at weekends. Showing off on a ride is more likely in a group, and one warning may not be enough.

Busy queues, short cycles

A long queue puts pressure on staff to load quickly. The rules get shortened or skipped, and restraints are checked in a hurry.

Dark, cold and wet

Short days mean most rides run in the dark. Rain makes platforms and steps slippery, and HSE lists heavy rain and strong winds as reasons to stop a ride (para 318) [9].

Spectators close to the ride

Parents and friends stand at the barrier. HSE notes that spectators may be relatives of riders, and distressed (para 301) [9]. If staff do not act fast, others will try to.

Small sites, tight access

Winter markets and lights events often sit in town squares and parks. Rides are packed close to stalls, which leaves little room for an ambulance or for people to move away.

ACTION

Watch one full cycle of each ride at your next event, from the queue to the exit, and count how many times the rules are given.

06

Tool: stop the ride triggers

When a ride should be stopped, and who acts. Agree these with each controller before opening. Drawn from HSG175 [9].

A warning that is ignored is a reason to stop, not to warn again. Agree a simple signal from the attendant to the operator, such as a raised arm, and make sure every attendant knows it (para 320) [9].

Trigger	Who stops it	What happens next
A rider ignores an instruction while moving	Operator, on sight or signal	Stop, remove the rider, record it
Riders interfere with seats, bars or restraints	Operator	Stop, check every restraint
Noise, vibration or a change in how it runs	Operator	Stop. Controller checks it first
Strong wind, heavy rain or lightning	Operator, on the controller's call	Stop and close until safe
Crowding at the gate or platform	Operator	Stop loading, clear the area
Anyone hurt or in distress	Operator, as soon as it is safe	Stop, call controller and first aid

Table 6. Stop the ride triggers. Drawn from HSG175 paras 285, 286, 309, 318, 321 and 323 [9]. Who acts is OTAS guidance.

ACTION

Agree the stop signal with each controller, and test it with the attendants before opening.

07

Tool: rider conduct signage and PA script

Short words, said often. Agree them with each controller so they match the ride's own rules. OTAS guidance, drawing on HSG175 para 285 [9] and HSE advice for the public [13][14].

Sign at the queue start

- Stay seated. Hold on. Keep your hands to yourself.
- No standing, kneeling, swapping seats or holding other seats.
- Follow the attendant. If you do not, the ride will stop and you will be asked to leave.

PA, every few minutes

- "Welcome to the fair. On every ride, stay seated, hold on and follow the attendant."
- "For everyone's safety, the operator will stop any ride if riders do not follow the rules."
- "Parents and carers, please stay behind the barriers and leave the controls to the ride staff."

From the attendant at the gate

- "Sit back, hold on, hands on your own seat."
- "If you hold another seat or stand up, I will stop the ride."

HSE advises parents to tell children to sit still, because turning, kneeling and standing take riders out of the safe position in the seat [14]. Use that in your PA and on your website before the event.

ACTION

Add the PA lines to your running order, with a time for each.

08
What to do at each level

Operational

Rules at the gate

Tell the operator

Keep the controls clear

Give the rules at the gate in plain words. If a rider ignores them once the ride is moving, tell the operator straight away so they can stop the ride. Keep spectators away from the controls. After an incident, keep the area clear and wait for the controller.

Tactical

Agree the stop

Walk the rides

Brief the first ten minutes

Agree with each controller how their staff give the rules and when they stop the ride. Walk the rides during opening. Watch queues, barriers and the operator's view. Make sure every steward knows the plan for the first ten minutes.

Strategic

Check every ride

Plan the access lane

Name who decides

Check every ride before it is booked: DOC, insurance, risk assessment and rider rules. Plan the layout with an access lane. Write who takes charge, who reports and who decides when a ride reopens.

ACTION

Pick one action at your level and do it before your event opens.

09

What we do not know yet

- What caused the incident at the Rotherham fair, and what the equipment checks found.
- Whether any engineering assessment has been made of the Georgia swing ride, and what it found.
- How the Louisiana tub door came to be open, which investigators have not proved.
- What the organisers of each event knew about the rides' rider rules before they opened.

ACTION

We will update this Insight if investigators, the councils or the operators publish more. We will not speculate about the cause of any incident.

10

Coming up: Christmas fairs

Christmas markets, light trails and winter wonderlands open across the UK from mid November, many with a wheel, swings and children's rides. Most run in the dark, in busy town centres, with groups of young people after school. The rider rules and the stop need to be agreed before the first night [9].

ACTION

If you need support with planning rides and attractions at your winter event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

Questions

Is a rider ignoring the rules really our problem?

Yes. HSE lists passengers deliberately failing to follow safety instructions as reasonably foreseeable misuse (para 31) [9]. HSE's guidance says it is unlikely to include deliberate or outrageously reckless actions, such as trying to defeat a restraint (para 30). Changing seats while the ride is in motion, or getting past a properly installed and effective safety device or fence, is not foreseeable misuse (para 32) [9]. The controller must plan for riders ignoring instructions, and as organiser you should check they have.

Who should stop the ride?

The operator, who is in charge of the ride throughout the cycle (para 273) [9]. Stewards and spectators should not touch the controls. Agree how an attendant or steward tells the operator to stop.

Can a steward also work the ride?

HSE says stewards should not be involved in operating rides (para 181) [9]. Keep the two jobs apart.

How do we check a ride is safe to book?

Ask for the DOC number and check it on the ADIPS website, because a paper copy is not proof [17]. A DOC is normally valid for 12 months [18]. Ask for insurance and the risk assessment too [21].

Do incidents with riders need reporting?

If a member of the public is taken from the ride straight to hospital for treatment, it is likely to be reportable under RIDDOR. The ride controller is usually the responsible person (paras 306 and 307) [9].

What about events in Scotland?

You may need a public entertainment licence from the council under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 [23]. Ask the council early, and plan to share ride details with them.

If a rider ignored your attendant tonight, would your operator stop the ride, or wait for the cycle to end?

ACTION

Send us your question and we will add the answer to the next update.

Sources

Web sources opened 9 November 2026 and labelled with their publisher.

1. **WRDW News 12, teens forced Columbia County fair ride swing out of control, 7 November 2026** wrdw.com
2. **CBS Newspath via Local 12, Georgia fair swing ride disrupted, teens charged, 8 November 2026** local12.com
3. **BBC News, children and woman injured on fairground ride, Maltby, 12 September 2026** bbc.com
4. **Greatest Hits Radio South Yorkshire, officers respond to injuries at Maltby Crags Fair, September 2026** hellorayo.co.uk
5. **WBRZ, both girls thrown from Ferris wheel in New Roads recovering at home, November 2025** wbrz.com
6. **WBRZ, state fire marshal to change inspection protocol after New Roads Ferris wheel accident, 12 November 2025** wbrz.com
7. **WAFB, documents outline potential reason for New Roads Ferris wheel incident, 4 May 2026** wafb.com
8. **WAFB, New Roads Ferris wheel incident drives Louisiana carnival ride safety reform, 8 April 2026** wafb.com
9. **HSE, HSG175 Fairgrounds and amusement parks: Guidance on safe practice, third edition, 2017** hse.gov.uk
10. **HSE, HSG175 publication page** hse.gov.uk
11. **HSE, fair organisers** hse.gov.uk
12. **HSE, employers of fairground ride controllers** hse.gov.uk
13. **HSE, safety of members of the public on fairground rides** hse.gov.uk
14. **HSE, keeping children safe at fairgrounds** hse.gov.uk
15. **HSE, event safety, amusements and attractions** hse.gov.uk
16. **HSE, event safety, put crowd controls in place** hse.gov.uk
17. **ADIPS, check a DOC** adips.co.uk
18. **ADIPS, frequently asked questions** adips.co.uk
19. **The Showmen's Guild of Great Britain, fairground safety** showmensguild.co.uk
20. **The Purple Guide, amusements, attractions and promotional displays** thepurpleguide.co.uk
21. **Dover District Council, event planning, fairground and amusement rides** dover.gov.uk
22. **NAFLIC, National Association for Leisure Industry Certification** naflic.co.uk
23. **Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, section 41, public entertainment licences** legislation.gov.uk

Related OTAS Insights

These are links to other OTAS Insights pieces, not to any OTAS Live product or service.

Christmas lights switch on: planning the capacity
Overhead banners and arches at winter markets

Guidance: this Insight summarises HSE guidance as published on hse.gov.uk, including HSG175, with ADIPS, trade body and council guidance and Scottish licensing law. It is not legal advice. Ask your council, your safety advisory group and each ride controller what applies to your event.

Interest: OTAS Live Ltd, which publishes OTAS Insights, sells event operations services, handbooks and training related to this topic.

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ACTION

Check the sources before you quote them, and tell us if any link has changed.

OVER TO YOU

If a rider ignored your attendant tonight, would your operator stop the ride, or wait for the cycle to end?

If you need support with planning rides and attractions at your winter event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

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