

A FOCUS ON SAFETY...

At Bennington, we know that there's nothing more important than safe driving. Over the years, the range of accessories that provide drivers and backsteppers with the peace of mind that allows driving - for both pleasure and at competition level - to be both safe and fun, has grown significantly. Fiona Bonney from Zilco Europe expands on some of the best safety accessories available.

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Quick Release Tugs

Quick release tugs are nowadays quite commonly used on all harnesses. Their function is partly for convenience when putting the horse in or out of the carriage, but also facilitates quick un-harnessing in an emergency situation.

They are particularly useful for vehicles with independent shafts, because it makes the process of harnessing much easier with each shaft being lowered into place and the tug closed around it.



Release Snaps and Pull Tabs

Commonly used as the connection between carriage and traces. Some vehicles have quick-release snaps integrated onto the swingle trees. The fitting was first used in the marine sector, but they are very useful in harness, as it means the trace can be disconnected with a quick pull on the release ring.

These fittings have a spring mechanism within them, which needs checking and oiling from time to time. Otherwise they can get sand and grit into the mechanism which can impede smooth operation. They are available in different sizes and weights to suit different applications. It is important to have a suitable pull tab on the release ring to ensure it can be grasped easily.

Miscellaneous Snaps

There are various means of making harnessing quicker and easier, for both convenience, and to get drivers out of accident situations in a hurry. Some drivers like to have a small snap fitting on the crupper, so that the whole breeching assembly can be jettisoned in an emergency. A snap fitting can also be useful on the breeching straps, between the ring of the breeching and the breeching straps themselves.



Safety Belt

A driver's safety belt is first and foremost NOT a means to strap someone into a carriage. To do so would be very dangerous. A carriage driver's safety belt is a strap that helps the driver to stay in their seat; for example, during a rough marathon drive where the driver is being bounced around in their seat. One end is fastened to the carriage and the other end must be held at all times by the backstepper or passenger. This gives the driver more security, and enables them to concentrate on driving while the person holding the strap ensures that the driver stays in their seat.

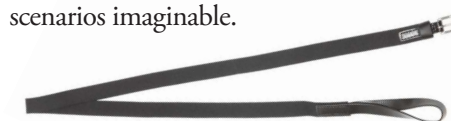
It is very important that a driver or passenger cannot be trapped into a vehicle in the event of a turnover, and this is the reason for the end of the safety belt to remain free to release in an emergency. The strap pictured here has a rubberised holding strap so the passenger or backstepper can easily grip the strap in all weather conditions.



Gullet Straps

Gullet straps connect the throatlash to the noseband, underneath the horse's head. This helps to prevent the bridle being pulled off accidentally. This is more likely to happen with pairs and teams, especially when the horses are stationary and rubbing their heads against each other or the pole or bars.

It can happen to singles too; for example a hot horse coming into the halt and rubbing its head on the shaft or its own legs. A moments loss of concentration from the handler can result in the bridle being pulled off and a subsequent complete loss of control. This is one of the most potentially dangerous scenarios imaginable.



Rein Retainer

This item is a means of preventing a dropped rein falling outside of the carriage where it cannot be retrieved. It is normally a simple elastic strap which is buckled to the rein ends and one end attached to the carriage at the other.



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