

NEISS has been gathering these statistics systematically over many years, so that trends become clear over time.

SOARING INJURY RATES IN OUR PARKS

Beginning in 1996, a sharp upward trend can be seen in hospital emergency room visits by passengers on "fixed" rides—the category of rides exempt from CPSC regulation under the Roller Coaster Loophole. These injuries soared 96 percent over the next five years. Meanwhile, such emergency room visits were falling for passengers on rides that the CPSC still regulates.

Here are the year-by-year estimates of non-occupational amusement ride injuries, 1996–2001, from the CPSC:

Year	Fixed ("unregulated")	Mobile ("regulated")
1996	3419	2963
1997	5353	2562
1998	6523	2751
1999	7629	2788
2000	6595	3985
2001	6704	1609

The theme park industry likes to tell the public that its rides are safer than the mobile rides because they are overseen by a permanent park staff, but according to this independent government safety agency report, the mobile parks have less of an injury problem than the theme parks.

Why has this startling increase in amusement park rides occurred recently? No one knows for sure. If the facts were known to the CPSC, it could do its job. But the facts are kept from the CPSC, so we are left to speculate.

We know, for example, that new steel technology and the roller coaster building boom of the 1990s resulted in an increase in the speed almost as dramatic as the increase in serious injuries. All of the nation's 15 fastest coasters have been built in the last 10 years.

In 1980, the top speed hit 60 mph. In 1990, it hit 70 mph. The top speed today is 120 mph.

For the most part, these rides are designed, operated and ridden safely. But clearly, the margin for error is much narrower for a child on a ride traveling at 100 mph than on a ride traveling 50 mph. Children often do foolish things, and the operators themselves are often teenagers. People make mistakes. The design of these rides must anticipate that their patrons will act like children, because they often are children.

THE BILL RESTORES BASIC SAFETY OVERSIGHT TO THE CPSC

The bill we are introducing today will close the special-interest loophole that prevents effective federal safety oversight of amusement park rides. It would, therefore, restore to the CPSC the standard safety jurisdiction over "fixed-site" amusement park rides that it used to have before the Roller Coaster Loophole was adopted. There would no longer be an artificial and unjustifiable split between unregulated "fixed-site" rides and regulated "mobile" rides. When a family traveled to a park anywhere in the United States, a mother or father

would know that their children were being placed on a ride that was subject to basic safety regulations by the CPSC.

It would restore CPSC's authority to:

1. Investigate accidents,
2. Develop an enforce action plans to correct defects, and
3. Act as a national clearinghouse for accident and defect data.

The bill would also authorize appropriations of \$500 thousand annually to enable the CPSC to carry out the purposes of the Act.

I urge my colleagues to join us in this effort to make this the safest summer ever in our theme parks. Let's pass the National Amusement Park Ride Safety Act.

IN MEMORY OF LANCE CORPORAL MATTHEW SMITH

HON. MIKE PENCE

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, it is with equal amounts of profound pride and sympathy that I come to the floor this morning. I rise to honor a noble American, Lance Corporal Matthew R. Smith, a Marine Corps reservist from Anderson, IN, killed Saturday, May 10, while serving his country in Kuwait. Lance Corporal Smith lost his life in a vehicle collision while running supply missions between Iraq and Kuwait. Lance Cpl. Smith was just 20 years old. He is survived by his father David, his mother Patricia, and by his brother Mason.

Lance Corporal Smith was assigned to Detachment 1, Communications Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Force Service Support Group based in Peru, IN, an outfit he had served selflessly and courageously since enlisting in June of 2001.

Lance Corporal Smith's father David said that his son had an intense love for the Corps, and his fellow Marines. Mr. Smith told the Indianapolis Star, "How many people on this Earth die doing the job they know they were put here to do." His Aunt Vicki added, "He died doing what he believed in."

Lance Corporal Smith was a student of history—he was enrolled at Indiana University before he was called to active duty—an interest he vigorously embraced in his free time, in the classroom, and as a member of the Social Studies Academic Team. His school teachers recall a young man often expressing blunt, straight-forward and in-your-face viewpoints which they always found to be well researched and sophisticated for his age. He was also an accomplished athlete; he spent time during high school playing rugby and was active in other outdoor activities.

Mr. Speaker, Lance Corporal Smith joins the 137 other proud and distinguished Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice—these wonderful men and women gave their lives in defense of freedom, a freedom we all too often take for granted.

May God bless the family of Lance Corporal Smith during this difficult time, and may they experience the prayers and thanks of a grateful nation. May they rest upon the promise of Jeremiah 31:13, "I will turn their mourning into gladness. I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow."

A TRIBUTE TO PRESIDENT CHEN SHUI-BIAN

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 22, 2003

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honor and a true privilege as the ranking Member in the House International Relations Committee, to congratulate President Chen Shui-bian and the people of Taiwan upon the third anniversary of his election.

President Chen has been an instrumental component as Taiwan moves along the path of democratization and wide economic reform. Moreover, President Chen deserves recognition for repeatedly demonstrating his commitment to human rights and rule of law. These are no small accomplishments, and are but one of the litany of achievements that that President Chen has scored while in office. In this regard, I would like to share with my colleagues a small sample of the highlights of President Chen's first three years in office.

First, President Chen has shown a continued commitment to the long-standing economic and cultural relationship that exists between the United States and Taiwan. Today, Taiwan remains a top ten trading partner and the strength of our cultural ties can be clearly seen by the number of Taiwanese students, currently at more than 30,000, who attend U.S. colleges and universities.

Second, President Chen has been a quiet yet fiercely determined leader in bringing Taiwan greater exposure and admittance to the global community nations. His success in this area is evident by the recent entrance of Taiwan into the World Trade Organization (WTO). Mr. Speaker, future goals include seeking membership in the World Health Organization and the International Civic Aviation Organization.

Third, President Chen has exhibited great diplomacy with his cautious and measured comments and actions toward the People's Republic of China. Mr. Speaker, I personally believe that President Chen demonstrated great courage when he promised that Taiwan would not seek independence as long as Beijing refrains from using force against Taiwan.

Mr. Speaker, this short list is but illustrative of President Chen's achievements to date. I strongly urge all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating President Chen Shui-ban on the first three years of his presidency, and wish him continued success on all of his future endeavors.