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Horse Runs Loose in Downtown S.A.

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By Matt Woolbright – Express News

Police are often called to quell simmering situations on holiday mornings. But the frantic call that squawked across the police radio at 10:30 a.m. was among the most unusual: A runaway horse was loose on Houston Street, rounding corners, fleeing from its handler.

The runaway was one of the carriage horses that give tours of the downtown area. It is a Percheron draft horse and has been walking the downtown streets two or three years now, the owner said.

“It was sort of scary — very unusual,” said Patty Gray, a visitor from the Houston suburb of Pearland. “Definitely was not what I expected to see on my visit; I mean there is a runaway horse in downtown San Antonio!”

The horse was standing calmly in front of the Alamo when the airbrakes on one of the city busses spooked it.

The rider grabbed the reins, attempting to stop the animal, but she was knocked off when the horse turned a corner, brushing her against a light pole. Shortly after, the horse lost its carriage when it attempted to go between a building and green electric box—then it was free running.

The horse dipped in and out of traffic until several bicycle police responding to the abnormal dispatch finally caught it.

A veteran officer on the scene said similar escapes occur once every few years. To its credit, the escaped tour-guide stayed on its route.

Two hours later, the same horse provoked police attention, this time when a passenger was thrown from the carriage on the way back to the barn.

“They did not listen to us, we told them to get a trailer for the horse earlier,” said an officer who responded to both incidents.

While walking back to the barn, the driver was forced to take the turn from Alamo Street to Durango very sharp—due to a car in the left turn lane on Durango — causing a wheel on the Amish-made carriage to bump the curb.

The horse then lost its balance and the carriage flipped over, ejecting the animal's barn manager who was taking it home.

EMS responded, but there were no injuries requiring medical attention.

The owner examined the horse after the fall and said everything was fine, albeit two random occurrences in a day's work.

The draft horse is being taken out of service for the next week to ten days, the owner said.