



Horses Without Carriages International™
global support for a ban on horse-drawn carriages

Four injured in two Swallows Day Parade accidents

By MEGHANN M. CUNIFF / STAFF WRITER

Published: March 22, 2014 Updated: March 24, 2014 11:43 a.m.



SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO – Two incidents involving out-of-control horses hospitalized three people and delayed the start of the annual Swallows Day Parade in San Juan Capistrano by about 45 minutes Saturday.

A 52-year-old man was knocked from his wheelchair when two horses pulling a carriage filled with people bolted at the start of the parade and ran into a crowd of onlookers. One of the horses fell on the man as horrified bystanders ran for safety.

“We didn't know if he was killed,” said Joe Beard, a San Juan Capistrano resident. They were just trampling him.”

Medics took the man to Mission Hospital in an ambulance, said Orange County Fire Authority spokesman Capt. Steve Concialdi. A woman in her 60s who injured her knee also was transported, Concialdi said.

Concialdi described the man's injuries as moderate and the woman's mild. A woman in her 30s suffered bumps and bruises, but declined medical treatment, Concialdi said.

About an hour after the horses bolted, a 55-year-old woman fell from a carriage being pulled by a miniature horse and struck her head on the street while turning from El Camino Real onto Ortega.

"She was holding on to the reins trying to get him to slow, but he wouldn't slow," said Jill Stafford, who witnessed the accident with her 11-year-old daughter, Sierra Starnes.

An ambulance rushed her to Mission Hospital. Concialdi did not have an update on her condition late Friday.

The accidents occurred after a 57-year-old man died of a heart attack outside Sarducci's restaurant, marring the town's premiere event with what authorities described as an unusual number of incidents.

"It was shocking, yet we were able to react to it," said Orange County sheriff's Lt. John Meyer, chief of San Juan Capistrano Police Services. Sheriff's officials and medics are trained to react to chaos and were prepared for disaster, which made it easy to get ambulances to the victims and transport them out of town quickly, Meyer said.

Hundreds of people witnessed the incidents, and some were badly shaken.

"It was horrible," Beaird said. "We can enjoy the kids but not the horses today."

Officials aren't sure what spooked the horses.

But the incidents left some witnesses questioning the safety of so many animals in such a small area.

"You're kind of asking for trouble," said Ellen Gaddie.