

Manufacturer cites improper assembly in carnival ride fall

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By Sally Voth

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WINCHESTER — The manufacturer of the carnival ride that malfunctioned and seriously injured a Frederick County Fair attendee is blaming the incident on improper assembly.

West Virginia resident Joely Everhart, 47, suffered multiple broken bones and remains at Winchester Medical Center after her seat on the Super Shot fell off the ride's main frame on July 25.

A press release from the manufacturer of the Super Shot, A.R.M. (USA) Inc., of Wintersville, Ohio, says "based on information from post-accident inspectors who have viewed the subject ride, the sole cause of the accident was a failure to properly assemble the ride before use."

The Wednesday release says there was no "structural failure of the passenger seat frame, main vehicle frame, or a failure of a cable or hydraulic brake."

It says A.R.M. has been in business for more than 18 years, and has designed and manufactured hundreds of rides, including more than 60 Super Shots, "which have had an impressive safety record."

"The transportable Super Shot, like all portable amusement rides, must be properly assembled and inspected before operation," the release says. "The company wants to assure its other Super Shot owners that by following the manufacturer's assembly, inspection and maintenance procedures, their ride is safe for operation."

In Virginia, local building departments are responsible for inspecting rides before operation, as well as for investigating any incidents involving the rides.

The Frederick County Building Inspections Department's investigation into the incident is still being completed, county public information officer Karen Vacchio said Wednesday. She said officials hope the investigation is completed by next week.

Vacchio couldn't comment on the release from A.R.M. because she hadn't seen it.

"We have not received the manufacturer's report as of yet," she said. "We don't know if we will."

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission is also investigating the incident, according to spokesperson Patty Davis.

"We have jurisdiction over mobile amusement rides, which means the traveling carnivals," she said. "So if there's an incident involving an injury or a death or a safety issue with the ride, we get involved."

Davis said the investigation is ongoing.

The Super Shot at the Frederick County Fair is owned by Inners Shows, of Franklinton, N.C. Edward Inners said Wednesday the ride was still being inspected, and isn't in operation.

"That's got to go back to the manufacturer," he said. "[A.R.M.] didn't give me no information on anything yet."

Robert Johnson, president of the Outdoor Amusement Business Association, in Orlando, Fla., said the A.R.M. press release was issued to people in the industry.

"I understand they quickly, and on the advice of their attorney, wanted to inform people in the industry that have this ride or similar versions of the ride," Johnson said Wednesday.

He said the business association has about 2,500 members.

"[A.R.M.] gave [the release] to us to give it out to our membership and our audience," Johnson said. "We know that there's probably going to be litigation. There may even be legislative changes regarding the inspection process in the state of Virginia. That's where we will get involved at some point."

He said there haven't been many serious incidents on amusement rides, and when there is one, "everyone's ride antenna goes up."

"We're all very, very taken aback and saddened by what happened," Johnson said. "We want to do everything in our power to help educate others who have similar rides and educate our industry as to what might have happened and how to prevent that in the future."

Mike Gill, president of A.R.M., didn't return numerous calls and messages for comment on Wednesday.

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