

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ECONOMY

Coasters Find a Whole New Way to Roll

Check It Out! In this chapter you learned about the factors of production—land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship. In the following article, read to learn how traditional roller coasters are being modernized, keeping in mind the factors of production needed to perform this modernization.

Hold on tight. The Joker's Jinx, a new roller coaster at the Six Flags America theme park in Largo, Maryland, will make its debut this coming May. And its trick piece of technology, the linear induction motor (LIM), is helping redefine the way roller coasters roll. The new beasts are faster, smoother, and scarier than their wooden predecessors.

So far, Premier Rides of Maryland, the roller coaster manufacturer that helped develop the technology, has launched seven LIM coasters. Three more, including The Joker's Jinx, will follow this year. Conventional roller coasters are dragged by chains or cables—clank, clank, clank—to the top of the first hill. Then gravity causes the cars to accelerate. In contrast, Premier Rides' coasters slingshot passengers out of the loading station, accelerating from zero to 70 miles per hour in less

than four seconds. The secret is the high-tech motors, about 200 of which are used in each coaster. When juiced with an alternating current, the motors create an electromagnetic force that accelerates the coaster over the first 200 feet of the ride.

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Think About It

1. Provide two examples of each factor of production that went into developing the new coasters.
2. What is the opportunity cost of spending a day at an amusement park?

