

MAFES Dawg Tracks



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Agriculture Safety on Public Roads



Each year we read about incidents involving farm equipment on public roads. Any time one of these incidents occurs, it usually results in costly damages to equipment, injuries and/or death to the ones involved.

Collisions with other vehicles make up half of these incidents. Running off the roads, overturning, striking a fixed object or falling from the equipment makes up the remainder. According to the National Safety Council (NSC), about one-third of these accidents occur on public roads.

Accidents can happen when farm equipment operators:

- Lack the experience to handle the heavy, slow moving machinery.
- Drive too fast, particularly when pulling a heavy load or turning.
- Drive partially over the center line.
- Drive partially on the shoulder, and partially on the main road surface.
- Run into a tree or other fixed object.

One major reason for farm machinery accidents on public roads is the difference in speed between cars and tractors. Motorists approach the slow moving farm equipment so fast that they only have a few seconds to identify the hazard and react appropriately. This is the reason that it is important for farm equipment to be highly visible and to have proper identification because it moves slower than regular traffic.

Slow Moving Vehicle:

- ~ A SMV sign should be centered on the back of the tractor or towed implement.
- ~Clearly visible from 150 meters (app. 450 feet).
- ~Clean, not faded or damaged.

Check out the Equipment before "heading" out on a move - (tractors & towed implements):

- Check that all the lights, head and tail lights, flashers, and signal lights are working.
- Use safety-type hitch pins and make sure they are securely fastened.
- Make sure that the safety chain for towed equipment is intact and attached.
- Check tires for pressure, cuts or bumps.

- **Always** lock brakes together for public road travel. Sudden braking on one wheel only at a high speed could put the tractor into a dangerous skid.
- Rearview mirrors, flares and fire extinguishers should be standard equipment on tractors that frequent public roads.
- Check to see that the SMV is properly mounted and visible.
- Check towed equipment. The load should be properly balanced and secured properly. Double check to see that the tractor isn't overloaded. Heavy wagons should be equipped with independent brakes.

Safe Driving Tips:

Farm machinery operators can make road travel safer for themselves and others by heeding the following instructions:

- Avoid busy roads whenever possible, even if travel time will be longer.
- Travel at a speed that will allow you to maintain full control at all times.
- Slow down when making turns or rounding curves.
- Observe road travel precautions listed in operator manuals. Some tractors freewheel in higher gears. This can be very dangerous when coming down a hill. Use lower gear ranges when climbing or descending hills.
- If possible, drive on the shoulder of the road of a paved highway. However, don't drive partly on the shoulder and partly on the paved lane.
- Stay alert for soft shoulders, narrow bridges, loose gravel, bumps, potholes, and deep ruts.
- When traffic is lined up behind you and a suitable shoulder is available, pull over to let the traffic pass.
- When possible, move equipment in daylight periods of light traffic.
- Travel after dark only if it is absolutely necessary. Remember that you need all the proper lighting for night driving.
- Don't take chances by pulling onto a road in front of moving traffic. Enter and exit roadways very cautiously if your view is obstructed.
- Obey traffic laws and signs.

AS IN ALL SEGMENTS OF DRIVING-COURTESY IS A KEY COMPONENT OF ROAD SAFETY!