

10 Keys To Safely Transporting Farm Equipment

Each year, incidents involving tractors and other farm machinery occur on public roads, causing costly equipment damage and, more seriously, injury and death.

Collisions with other vehicles make up nearly half of these accidents. Running off the road, overturning, striking a fixed object or falling from equipment make up the remainder.

The National Safety Council says about one-third of fatal tractor accidents occur on public roads. Here are 10 common-sense safety tips that can help. Although most of these points are obvious, they merit careful review.

1 Obey all traffic laws, including speed limits, traffic signals and signs. Operators should have a valid driver's license and be familiar with the operation of the machine. Children should never be allowed to operate or ride on equipment.

2 Have slow-moving vehicle emblems and reflectors in place on all tractors and on any implements. Emblems should be clean and in good condition. In certain locations the color of SMV emblems can fade in two or three years. Replace broken, worn or discolored emblems.

3 Be sure brake pedals are locked together and brakes are adjusted for equal pedal movement to assure straight-line stops when traveling on the road.

4 Don't move farm equipment on public roads anytime between sunset and sunrise. This also applies to daytime conditions when forward visibility is limited to 500 feet or when conditions such as snow or ice make roads hazardous.

5 Light your farm equipment properly. This means having turn signals, headlights and taillights that conform to state vehicle codes. Flashing amber lights should be operated whenever farm equipment is traveling on public roads, unless prohibited by law. Turn off rear-facing work lights. Make sure load does not obscure lights and warning devices.

6 Be sure tractors are equipped with a rollover protective structure, cab or frame. Always wear a seat belt with this type of structure. If a rollover occurs, the safety belt helps keep the driver inside a "protective zone" created by the ROPS.

7 Make certain the tractor is properly counterweighted and that all attachments are secure and properly mounted. Never operate attachments during road

travel. Keep the power-take-off lever in neutral.

8 Match the tractor to its load. Hitch the load only to the tractor drawbar or hitch points. The drawbar is designed to allow pulling of heavy loads without the risk of backward overturn. If the load is hitched any higher, the tractor can roll over by rotating around the axle.

9 Do not exceed speeds of 20 mph for towed equipment without brakes. Also, don't tow equipment without brakes that, when fully loaded, weighs more than one and a half times the weight of the towing unit. For towed equipment with brakes, don't exceed speeds of 25 mph. Also, don't tow equipment that, when loaded, weighs more than four and a half times the weight of the towing unit. (Note: When towing equipment that has brakes, the tractor must be equipped with the correct braking package that's connected to the towed equipment.) Stopping distance increases with speed and weight of towed loads, as well as on hills and slopes. With or without brakes, towed loads that are too heavy for the tractor or that are towed too fast can cause loss of control. Consider the total weight of the equipment and its load.

10 Slow down on turns and curves. A tractor's turning radius is much smaller than that of most automobiles. Taking a curve too fast can cause an overturn or jackknife if machinery is attached. ▲

Risky business: Unless all safety precautions are taken, transporting farm equipment on public roads can be very hazardous.

