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**Southwest Center**  
FOR AGRICULTURAL HEALTH, INJURY PREVENTION, AND EDUCATION

## Monthly Safety Blast

*Produced by the Southwest Center for Agricultural Health, Injury Prevention and Education*

**August 2017**

### Rural Roadway Safety



Each year accidents involving tractors and other farm machinery occur on rural roads. The National Safety Council estimates that 15,000 collisions involving farm vehicles happen every year. Although, only 19% of Americans live in rural areas, 55% of highway deaths occur on roads that are considered rural.

According to NIOSH, the average age of tractors in operation in the United States is about 26 years old. Thus, a significant number of tractors are still in use

that are not equipped with advanced steering, braking, and shifting technologies that would make driving on rural roadways safer.

#### **Safety tips for drivers on rural roads:**

- Be aware of the size of farm equipment. A typical paved rural road is 18-20 feet wide. The average width of farm equipment 13 feet.
- Slow down as soon as you spot a piece of farm equipment.
- Watch for hand signals.
- Be aware of the Slow Moving Vehicle sign (see red and orange image below).
- Watch for flashing amber lights.
- Do not speed past farm machinery.
- Do not stop or pull out in front of a slow moving vehicle.
- Don't expect farm equipment to stay on the shoulder.



#### **Safety tips for farm machine operators:**

- Display a slow moving vehicle emblem on all equipment that travels at speeds less than 25 mph. Check slow moving vehicle emblems for bright and reflective colors according to code. Replace all faded or defective emblems.
- Obey traffic laws, including speed limits, traffic signals and signs.

- Pull over and allow traffic to pass *when it is safe to do so*.
- Lock brake pedals together to assure straight-line stops.
- Avoid moving farm equipment on public roads after dark or in limited visibility.
- Ensure your equipment has proper lighting. Check your state laws for specific requirements.
- Only hitch implements to the tractor's draw bar or hitch points.
- When towing equipment without brakes, maintain a speed of 20 mph or less. For towed equipment with brakes, travel at 25 mph or less. Ensure that the towed load does not weigh more than 4 times the weight of the tractor.
- Slow down for turns and curves.
- Do not allow extra riders on the tractor or implement.
- If your tractor has a cab or roll bar, wear your seat belt. If your tractor does not have a roll bar or cab, consider a retrofit. It could save your life.



To all the motorists out there: Even though it is inconvenient to get behind farm equipment, it is not the worst thing that could happen. Don't put your life at risk or the equipment operator's life at risk to try and save a few minutes. Be safe and be thankful for those that produce food for you to eat every day.

**Bottom line: share the road, follow  
transportation laws and be respectful  
of other drivers.**



Take the [Rural Roadway Safety](#) quiz to test your knowledge!

**Resources:**

- <http://scfbins.com/resource-center/keeping-you-safe/safety-on-the-farm/farm-slow-moving-vehicles/>
- <https://cbsphilly.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/tractor-crash.jpg?w=800>
- <http://agsafety.tamu.edu/files/2011/06/SAFE-TRACTOR-OPERATION-ON-HIGHWAYS1.pdf>
- <http://sites.psu.edu/tonyrice/>

**Disclaimer:** The facts and information listed above are merely suggestions for your safety, but are in no way a comprehensive and exhausted list of all actions needed to insure your safety.

*Monthly Blast written by Megan Kelley, 2017 Noble*

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