



Farm Equipment Road Safety Tips

Driving in rural areas near farms? Read our 7 road safety tips for all drivers and 5 for farmers.

4/18/2008

More homes being built in rural areas near farms equals the chance for more collisions between farm equipment and personal vehicles.

The need to know your rural road safety guidelines also increases.

You know the scenario: Transplanted urbanites and suburban dwellers often find themselves in traffic with large, slow-moving farm equipment. They feel held up on their way to work or another destination and take unnecessary risks.

If you live, work or commute through an area populated with farm fields, drive with caution, especially during spring planting and fall harvest seasons.

A few rural road safety considerations: Slow down as soon as you spot a piece of farm equipment. In fact, if you see something ahead that is neither car nor truck, slow down--at least until you have identified the object.

Watch for hand signals. Just because a tractor veers right does not mean the operator is pulling over for you to pass. The sheer size of farm equipment often dictates the necessity of wide turns--hence the veer right. If a tractor operator is signaling you to wait, trust him. He has a much higher vantage point than you.

Be aware of the triangular Slow-moving-Vehicle (SMV) sign. Only use SMV signs on slow moving vehicles, not to mark driveways or for other non-vehicular uses. Not only are these actions illegal in many areas, they devalue the purpose of SMV signs, putting producers at risk when moving equipment.

Watch for flashing amber lights. This type of light often marks the far right and left of farm equipment. Also watch for reflective tape marking extremities and sides of equipment.

Do not speed past farm machinery. Even when you may pass safely and legally, the turbulence created by your vehicle may cause the machinery to sway and become unstable.

Do not pull out in front of slow moving vehicle and then slow suddenly. A tractor pulling a grain cart does not have the maneuverability of a car. Did I mention size? Make sure you have ample space to pass. As with any passing operation, check the rear-view mirror before returning to your travel lane.

Do not expect equipment to run partly on the road shoulders. Driving with one set of wheels on the pavement and one set on loose-surfaced shoulders substantially increases the risk of overturn or other accident.

When I meet a piece of equipment on the road, I personally try to find a safe spot to pull over to allow safe and easy passage of the implements. It's someone's life. It's someone's livelihood. And it's the meal we all eat tonight.

This article contains excerpts from "Road Safety" by Lisa Holscher. It first appeared in the May/June 2007 issue of Hobby Farms.

Reminders for Farmers

Farmers can consider these rural driving safety tips: Make sure all safety lights are clean and working. Replace any worn SMV emblems. Add reflective tape to your equipment: yellow on the sides, orange or red on the rear. Try not to group pieces of equipment together when traveling on high-traffic roadways. Motorists need time to pass and return to their lane. Space equipment to allow motorists to pass one unit at a time. Provide a follow car with hazard lights flashing. People respond better to this type of escort. Limit movements of equipment during evening or peak traffic hours. Keep lights on and flashing, even in the daytime.

A farmer may be required to transport equipment through small towns or developments. Talk to local law



enforcement officials. Don't expect them to drop what they are doing, but with ample warning, don't be surprised if traffic is halted to allow your safe passage.