

Farm safety takes everyone working together

Each year since 1944, the third week of September has been recognized as National Farm Safety and Health Week. This year, Gov. Sam Brownback has also proclaimed Sept. 15 to 21 as Kansas Farm Safety and Health Week.

It's no coincidence that national attention turns to safety during the busiest season of the year for agriculture, said John Slocombe, farm safety specialist with K-State Research and Extension. The push to get crops in and out of fields hits full speed in the fall. Livestock are moved from summer pasture to fall and winter locations. Tractors and farm implements are more common on rural roads during the fall. Sharing the road becomes increasingly important as farming season peaks and days become shorter.

"This year's theme, Working Together for Safety in Agriculture, really gets to

the core of safety on the farm and on rural roadways," Slocombe said. "Each of us, whether we work on the farm or not, has a responsibility to work safely and this is especially true as farm vehicles share the road with other motorists during the busy fall farming season."

Most crashes involving farm equipment on public roads involve a passenger vehicle and a farm implement. Too often these crashes result in fatality and most are preventable.

Tips for motorists:

- Expect to see more equipment on roadways during the busy agricultural seasons, such as during fall harvest, but be alert for farm equipment on the road year round, especially on rural roads.
- Be alert for agricultural equipment with slow-moving vehicle emblems, reflectors, or flashing lights.

- Slowing down immediately when you see agricultural equipment with emblems, which are red and orange, retro-reflective triangles attached to equipment meant to warn motorists to slow down because the equipment displaying the emblem is moving less than 25 miles per hour.
- Be extremely cautious when passing equipment because the operator may not see or hear you. Be patient; do not pass the slow moving equipment unless it is absolutely safe to do so.
- Pass with caution. The equipment may be longer and wider than you think.
- Be aware of possible left hand turns by farm equipment into fields. Watch for signal lights and hand signals. Scan your surroundings for the location field driveways before beginning to pass.

Tips for farmers:

- Use slow-moving vehicle emblems

- Emblems must be clean, unfaded and visible. New emblems can be reflective up to 1,200 feet. Replace faded and broken emblems.
- Check lights and reflectors before road travel. Make sure lights and blinkers function properly and visible by motorists.
- Maintain high visibility on the highway. Use lights, flashers, and turn signals to indicate your location and intentions.
- Use reflective marking tape to show the size of farm equipment.
- Pull over and allow traffic to pass, when it is safe to do so and you can pull off the road entirely with your equipment.
- Avoid or minimize road travel when it is dark, during morning and evening peak drive times, and during bad weather when

visibility may be poor.

- Use an escort vehicle when moving large equipment on the road.
- Consider installing service roads in fields along busy highways to eliminate travel on highways when feasible.

One final tip for farmers – never transport extra passengers on a tractor designed for one person. It's unsafe for the passenger and is a distraction to the tractor driver. Extra riders are at tremendous risk of falling from the tractor, which could place them in the path of a towed implement if one is attached to the tractor. If the tractor is equipped with an extra seat the rider should be seated and buckled while the tractor is moving.

It takes time to prevent farm accidents, Slocombe said. Unfortunately, it takes only seconds to become a farm accident victim. Plan ahead. Think safety first.

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