



On Your Side[®]

Sharing Rural Roads Safely

A Safety Message from Nationwide Agribusiness Insurance

Clearly, there are safety issues related to farm vehicles and equipment on public roads. Some data published by the National Ag Safety Database (NASD):

- Crash fatality rates in the most rural counties are almost double the rate in urban counties.
- Rural crashes are more frequent, more severe, and more likely to result in death than urban crashes.
- Certain types of crashes, such as those between motor vehicles and farm vehicles, are unique to rural environments and usually involve slow moving tractors with trailing equipment and higher speed motor vehicles.
- Tractors were found to be involved in the majority of crashes on roadways.
- In 23% of the cases where the farm operator was issued a citation, lighting and yield violations were noted. In at least 11% of the cases where the farm operator was cited, the crash occurred in the evening and the tractor was not utilizing adequate lighting.
- Most farmers believe driving their tractors on rural roads is more dangerous now than it was five years ago.
- As the size of farm equipment grows, increasingly, there is a lack of space on rural roads. Dr. Robert Aherin, University of Illinois extension agricultural safety specialist, has noted that most paved rural roads are 18-20 feet wide while 70% of farmers in an online panel survey indicated they owned machinery over 13 feet wide.
- Some newer machinery is manufactured for faster speeds. Tractors have historically been identified as moving 25 mph or less; but some new tractors may now travel up to 45 mph.

Especially during planting and harvest seasons, more farm vehicles are sharing roadways with other vehicles. That includes planters, combines and other farm equipment moving from one field to another, and trucks and tractors transporting produce or farm supplies.

Jerry Hillard, Farm Sales Director, Nationwide[®] Agribusiness, Des Moines, IA, reminds all motorists to exercise extra caution on rural roads to avoid accidents.

Driving defensively is important for all drivers, but especially critical for farm machinery operators as you can see from the NASD statistics.

Hillard advises farmers to follow these safety rules:

- Display the Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblem on all off-road vehicles. Make sure emblems are in good condition and properly mounted.
- Use proper vehicle lighting. Use flashers anytime you use public roads. The American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE) recommends two flashing amber lights, mounted at least 42 inches high, in both the front and rear.
- Comply with your state laws; most require using headlights one-half hour before sunset until one-half hour after sunrise. Also use headlights whenever insufficient light or unfavorable weather conditions exist. ASAE recommends two headlights on the front at the same level, positioned as far apart as possible. They also recommend one rear left and rear right red taillight mounted as far apart as possible, and two red reflectors visible from the rear.
- Inspect hitches to verify they are sturdy and properly mounted before towing equipment or using wagons. Always use safety chains if equipped.

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