



On Your Side®

Tractors can be dangerous: Use caution!

A Safety Message from Nationwide® Agribusiness Insurance

Industry statistics show the number one cause of injuries and fatalities in agricultural is tractor rollovers. In fact, according to the US Department of Labor there were nearly 900 fatalities between 2003 and 2007 involving farm tractors and about 43 percent were from rollovers. Taking a few safety precautions and having the proper equipment can help prevent serious injuries or fatalities.

“Despite decades of awareness of this problem and effective solutions available, the death toll continues to rise,” said Bill Windsor, Nationwide’s associate vice president of Consumer Safety. “The start of harvest season is a good time to remind everyone that most accidents can be prevented by following basic tractor safety guidelines and having proper rollover equipment.”

There are approximately 4.2 million tractors on farms and ranches across the United States and about 1.7 million of those tractors do not have rollover protective structures (ROPS). According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, if all tractors had ROPS fatality rates could be reduced by at least 71 percent.

“The average age of tractors is over 25 years and most tractors manufactured before 1985 do not have ROPS,” Windsor said. “To reduce fatalities, we need to continue to promote safe tractor operation, encourage farmers to retrofit older tractors with low-cost ROPS options and make newer technologies such as stability indicator sensors more widely available,”

Windsor adds that the tractor operator should use a seatbelt in conjunction with a ROPS to remain inside the protective zone during an overturn and to never ride with passengers.

In addition to rollovers, four other major areas cause most farm tractor accidents: run overs; blind spots; entanglements; and road accidents. Here are tips to prevent each. But the best idea is to develop a “safety first” attitude on your farm. Follow safe work practices at all times and set a good example for others.

Rollovers – be sure your tractor is equipped with a ROPS (rollover protective structure) and a seat belt; use the seat belt; back up steep slopes; check for uneven ground or large obstacles; avoid wet or muddy fields; drive tractors slowly.

Run overs – Always turn the engine off when you're not in the driver's seat; never allow extra riders, it's distracting and unsafe.

Blind spots – Never allow children to play or hide around tractors or other equipment. Walk all the way around tractors and other equipment before getting on to ensure you are aware of anything in your path.

Entanglements – Be sure your PTO (power take-off) shield is in place or replace it; always walk around an operating PTO, not over it; do not wear loose fitting clothing or allow loose, long hair around machinery with moving parts; disengage power and turn the engine off before trying to manually clear a clogged machine.

Road accidents – Tractors should not be operated on the highways without flashing lights and reflective Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblems displayed on the rear of any machinery, even if being towed. Stay aware of any traffic around you, and stay as far over to the right of the road as practical.

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