



MAFES Dawg Tracks

July 28, 2014



*Agriculture Safety on
Public Roads*



Tractors and various types of agriculture equipment are continuously being moved on our public roads. This is also true of our Research stations where hay, harvest, planting and other types of agriculture equipment are moved on public, state and county roads.

Each year there are a multitude of accidents involving farm equipment accidents on public roads. According to reports, about half of all road accidents involve collisions with other vehicles. Running off roads, overturning, striking a fixed object or falling from equipment makes up the remainder of the incidents. According to the National Safety Council (NSC) about 1/3 of these incidents occur on public roads.

There are many **reasons or causes** of these accidents or incidents, which we will discuss below:

Speed Differences-

- Most farm machinery is transported at speeds of 25 mph or slower – other vehicles are moving much faster.
- This speed difference causes motorists to misjudge or miscalculate how fast they are approaching the farm machinery. Worse than this is the fact that motorists will be driving so fast that they don't see the farm equipment.

Farm Size and Location-

- Today farms and ranches are getting bigger, which results in longer distances to move equipment.
- Due to the increase in distances, equipment shall be moved at longer distances – result is the ratio of movement distance to farm land locations increases the risk of an incident as opposed to shorter distances.

Size of the Machinery-

- The large equipment that is now used increases the risk even more than few years back because the large equipment sometimes overlaps into the incoming lane.
- This fact contributes to an enhanced risk or potential hazard.

Poor Visibility-

- Corners, hills and other blind spots reduces the motorists' ability to see farm equipment - either traveling on a roadway or pulling out on the road. Dirty windshields can block visibility.
- Due to the size of today's equipment, it is imperative that the driver be well-trained in their use.
- The operator must be very attentive and able to react quickly if needed when moving along roadways.

Motorists Unfamiliar with Slow-Moving-Vehicle (SMVs)-

- Some motorists may not know to slow down when approaching a SMV sign on equipment. This could cause an accident when the equipment and the vehicle are traveling in the same direction.

Old or Outdated Equipment-

- The equipment may have insufficient, old or lighting in bad repair.

Time of the Year-

- Heavy seasonal use during planting, haying and harvesting increases the potential for an accident.

Improper Transport Techniques-

- Failure to securely tie down equipment on truck beds or trailers can cause an accident.
- The equipment could slide off causing the trailer to tilt or overturn producing an accident.

Towing Equipment Too Fast-

- Obviously, towing equipment at uncontrollable speeds is a definite hazard to begin with, increasing the risk of swaying, causing the driver to lose control.
- Towing implements with chains can be extremely hazardous, especially if there are no means to provide tension except by applying the brakes.

Poor Road Conditions-

- Potholes, ditches, rough roads, and washouts can throw the operator off the machine or cause him to lose control.
- The same conditions can be applied to the driver of a truck who is hauling equipment if he isn't focused on road conditions along with other factors mentioned above.

Extra Riders-

- Self-propelled equipment, combines, cotton and corn pickers and other types of self-propelled equipment are all equipped from the factory with one seat, unless it is ordered with a "buddy seat" for training. Our MAFES policy is "**One Seat-One Rider**" always. If a "buddy" seat is provided, the trainee would not need to ride on a public road.

Maintenance of Equipment-

- Tractors or other equipment in poor repair with no brakes or bald tires.

Safe Driving Tips-

- ✓ Before making an over the road move with equipment, do a "first echelon" inspection check for tires, braking and lighting systems, safety chains for towed equipment etc... Always lock the brakes together for public road travel.
- ✓ Avoid busy roads when possible and travel at speeds where you are in control and not the machine.
- ✓ Observe road travel precautions listed in the operator's manual. Beware of free-wheeling, especially on downhill travels.
- ✓ Be careful when making turns and rounding curves. Travel after dark only when it is an absolute necessity.
- ✓ Stay alert for soft shoulders, loose gravel, narrow bridges, bumps and potholes.
- ✓ If traffic is lined up behind you – move to the shoulder when possible to allow traffic to pass. However, you shouldn't drive with 1/2 of the equipment on the shoulder and the other 1/2 in the highway.
- ✓ Don't gamble on entering the highway when traffic is heavy- enter cautiously, not when your view is obstructed.
- ✓ When possible, move equipment in daylight hours and when traffic is light.

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Excerpts: Pacific Northwest Ext. / Farm Safety Assoc.

Leave **Sooner** – Drive **Slower** – Live **Longer!**

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SAFETY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY!!