

AGRICULTURAL SAFETY HITS THE ROAD:

Safety Tips for Agricultural Vehicles on Public Roads

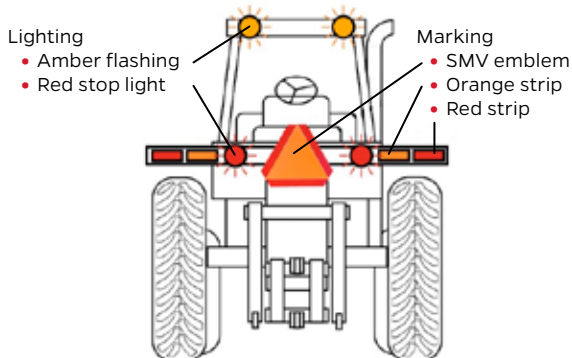
There are many times during normal operations when it is necessary for agricultural vehicles to use public roads. Agricultural vehicles have many special qualities that can create risks for their drivers and for drivers of other vehicles:

- Agricultural vehicles are usually slower moving
- Agricultural vehicles are large, and they may extend into the opposing lane
- They need more room to maneuver, especially when making a turn
- Agricultural vehicles are heavy. That means that they cannot speed up or slow down as fast as a car or truck.

Safety Tips for Agricultural Vehicle Operators

Proper lightning and marking prevent crashes —

Agricultural work often starts early, perhaps before dawn, and often ends late, perhaps when it is dark again. At night, it will be more difficult for drivers of other vehicles to understand the outlines of an unexpected type of vehicle. Lighting and marking to make an agricultural vehicle visible at a distance are critical. Lighting and marking regulations guide



agricultural vehicle owners to create a pattern of lighting and marking that is recognizable at a distance. This additional information for other drivers is very important. It signals to them at a greater distance that a large, unusually shaped vehicle is ahead of them on the road, and they need to slow down and take proper precautions.

An **SMV emblem** is an important part of a vehicle's marking. This signal is well recognized by many drivers, especially those that drive in rural areas. It is important to have use a correctly colored SMV emblem properly installed pointing up and as close to the vehicle centerline as possible. Check SMV emblems for fading and keep them clean so that they are at their most reflective.



Dawn and dusk are

dangerous times — The light and sky color at dawn and dusk make those times of day dangerous for drivers because it may be too dark to detect the outline of a vehicle on the road ahead and it may be too light for a vehicle's lights to be readily apparent. Proper precautions should be used at all times but think of dawn and dusk as times when extra caution is needed.

Use mirrors — Visibility works both ways. The driver of an agricultural vehicle needs to be able to see following vehicles. Because agricultural vehicles often do not travel far on public roads, it is easier to overlook these simple safety devices if they are missing or not in good repair. Be sure to adjust mirrors for proper visibility when towing equipment.

Use pilot vehicles — Consider using pilot vehicles if the agricultural vehicle and any towed equipment is very wide or very long. This may be required by law depending on the length, height, or width of the equipment. Know the legal requirements in your state.

No extra riders — All riders of an agricultural vehicle must have a proper seat and restraint. Drivers should never allow anyone to “hitch a ride” by perching anywhere on agricultural equipment.

Beware of slopes! — Usually, agricultural vehicles will be driven on familiar roads and for short distances, but in all cases, drivers of agricultural vehicles should be aware of slopes on shoulders and doubly aware of canals adjacent to roadways. The center of gravity of an agricultural vehicle tends to be high, making it easier to tip over to side at lower slopes than would affect a typical car or truck. Less experienced drivers should be especially careful, and supervisors and owners should be aware of a driver’s experience and the hazards of specific routes when possible.

Safety Tips for Sharing the Road with Agricultural Vehicles

Always slow down — Drivers of cars and trucks on rural roads should be alert for agricultural vehicles and should always slow down when an agricultural vehicle appears. Special caution is required when an agricultural vehicle is entering or leaving the roadway—the agricultural vehicle is likely to make a wide, slow turn that takes up part of the opposing lane. Other drivers must slow down to allow plenty of time for the lane to become clear. Be especially cautious when following or approaching an agricultural vehicle on a slope.

Be aware of visibility problems — The size of agricultural vehicles can compromise their drivers’ abilities to see other vehicles at all angles, especially following vehicles, at night, at dusk and dawn, and in rain or fog. Car and truck drivers should never assume that they are visible to the driver of an agricultural vehicle.

When following an agricultural vehicle, pass with extra caution — Passing an agricultural vehicle is more dangerous than passing a standard car or truck. A car driver’s view of the opposing lane will be limited by the agricultural vehicle, and it may not be possible

to detect life-threatening hazards like oncoming cars or curves at a sufficient distance to complete a safe pass. Extra speed is not the solution; it just increases the hazard.

When approaching an agricultural vehicle, pass with extra caution — Cars and trucks can crash into the parts of approaching agricultural vehicles that extend into their lane. The safe choice for the driver is always to slow down and make sure that they are aware of the full extent of the agricultural vehicle. If the shoulder must be used to pass an approaching agricultural vehicle, a driver must slow down and use adequate caution to detect unstable shoulders or excessive drop-offs.

Safety Tips for All Drivers

Do not drive distracted! — Rural roads can be long and lonely, but hazards can appear without warning. It is important to be alert at all times. Anything that takes a driver’s eyes off the road can lead to a crash—talking on the phone, adjusting the radio, spilling coffee, eating—all of these have caused crashes because they distracted the driver.

Do not drive when sleepy — Falling asleep behind the wheel regularly leads to serious crashes. Sleepy drivers should pull off the road and get some rest. Sometimes, it seems like there is no choice but to keep driving, but that can be a fatal choice.

Never drive impaired — Alcohol and drugs and driving do not mix. Alcohol and drug use frequently result in serious crashes. This cannot be stressed enough, and it applies to all drivers. Drivers of agricultural vehicles may feel that slower speeds make them less vulnerable to a serious crash, but the size and weight of an agricultural vehicle make it more difficult to recover from a mistake that could result in a severe incident.

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