Farm Machinery Safety on Public Roads



WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Occasionally, farm machinery must travel on public roads to transport loads or move from property to property. If the proper measures are taken to ensure safety, this can be done smoothly and safely. However, due to highway motorists neglecting to pay attention or getting impatient behind the slower moving vehicles, accidents can happen quicker than expected.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

One of the biggest reasons for accidents involving traveling farm equipment is because of the unexpected and miscalculated speed of this machinery. Oftentimes, highway drivers come across farm machinery at fast speeds, and their reaction time must be quick. If not, a collision is most certainly bound to happen.

EXAMPLE

A farmer was traveling along a main highway one afternoon. She did not have the proper signs and was not attentive. A long day ploughing her field left her exhausted, she just wanted to get home. A lineup of cars had collected behind her, passing her when safe, when a transport truck became impatient and tried to cut the corner to miss her. The backend of his truck knocked her and her machine into a low ravine. She was paralyzed from the neck down after months in a coma.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Accidents like these can be avoided with defensive driving, proper signage and an overall awareness of other drivers (i.e. being considerate of drivers wanting to get around you, watching for potential hazards in other drivers), ensuring you have done a complete check of the tractor and equipment prior to heading out. Here is a checklist you can apply in preparation:

- Make sure safety-type hitch pins are securely fastened.
- Use a safety chain between the tractor to the frame of the towed equipment.
- Check **all** tires for proper air pressure.
- Ensure you have locked brake pedals together before hitting the road.
- Make sure you are equipped with rear-view mirrors, flares, and fire

extinguishers.
- Check that all your lights are in good working order.
- Affix a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) sign on the center-rear of your machine. Keep it clean and new, and clearly visible from 150 metres (500 feet).
- If you have towed equipment, make sure it is perfectly balanced, secured and light enough to be pulled safely with your machine.

Here are some overall, safe driving tips:

- If possible, avoid busy roads.
- Keep the speed slow and steady, and slower still when rounding corners.
- Keep the machine in a lower gear when ascending or descending a hill, as some machines free-wheel in higher gears. Check your manual.
- Keep as far into the shoulder of the road as is safely possible but avoid driving with one half on the pavement and the other on the shoulder.
- Keep watch for hazards (i.e. narrow bridges, loose gravel, potholes), anything that could cause an accident.
- Have courtesy for highway travellers. To avoid impatience and any hasty, dangerous passes, pull over and allow people to go around whenever possible.
- Try to travel during the day as often as you can. If you must travel at night, ensure you have the proper lighting: headlights, red taillights, reflectors and, if possible, flashing amber lights.
- Take your time when crossing a road or pulling onto one.
- Obey all traffic signs and lights.

FINAL WORD

Agricultural work has its many dangers, taking a slow-moving machine onto a public road may be one of the bigger ones. So, slow down and be exceptionally aware, considering any potential hazard and making yourself as visible as possible.