

# Memo

**To:** Extension Agents for Agriculture  
Vocational Agriculture Teachers

**From:** Larry Piercy, Extension Safety Specialist  
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The Community Partners For Healthy Farming Project

Dr. Henry Cole, Professor  
Southeast Center For Agricultural Health and Injury Prevention &  
The Community Partners For Healthy Farming Project

**Date:** December 3, 1997

**Re:** Concerns Regarding the Use of Homemade Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS) on Farm Tractors

Current efforts to promote farm tractor rollover protective structures (ROPS) and seat belts are widespread and can save many lives. However, some farmers' may perceive the cost of ROPS available from dealers as too high. Information from sources throughout Kentucky suggest that in the interest of saving money some farmers are either making their own ROPS or hiring someone in the local community to do so. Homemade ROPS present a risk of injury and death as well as costly lawsuits.

Commercial ROPS available through tractor dealers are designed specifically for each model of tractor, tested for strength and proper performance and certified by the ROPS manufacturer. Construction of commercial ROPS requires the use of high quality materials such as special steel, bolts, and proper welds. These ROPS meet SAE, ASAE and OSHA design standards as noted on a label on the ROPS.

While it is not illegal to make a homemade ROPS for yourself or for someone else it is not wise to do so. During an overturn non-certified ROPS may fail and the operator may be injured or killed. In this event civil suits and large liability judgments may result against the person who constructed the homemade ROPS. Even if a farmer made his or her own ROPS and someone else drives the tractor and is injured or killed during an overturn, the farmer can be sued. Furthermore, under OSHA standards, it is illegal for a farmer to hire someone to operate a tractor with a homemade (non-certified) ROPS.

Would you please circulate this memorandum and information in your community to make others aware of this potential problem? It is important that farmers understand why they should use only certified ROPS available from equipment dealers. All the major tractor manufacturers currently have programs underway to make certified ROPS and seat belts available for many older model tractors. These ROPS are attractively priced at or near the manufacturer's cost to encourage farmers to take that extra step to protect themselves, their loved ones and employees against tragic unnecessary injury and death in the event of a sudden overturn (see the enclosed flyer).