



Maine Farm Safety Program

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Driving Farm Machinery Safely

Farm Driveways

The entrances to farm driveways often do not provide good visibility. Road collisions often occur where the farm's driveway meets the public road. To reduce this hazard, trim bushes and trees. Parked machinery and clutter should not obstruct the view at the driveway entrance.

Before Driving Farm Machinery on Public Roads

Safety is important when operating farm vehicles on public roads. Before driving, clean windshields and check wipers and defrosters. Check lights, tires and slow-moving vehicle signs. Keep lights, reflectors and side mirrors clean. Replace burned-out bulbs and lamps promptly. Use the flashing amber lights when traveling on a public road. If there are turn signals, be sure to show turns well in advance. Make sure brakes are functional and capable of safely stopping the vehicle and its

load. Lock brake pedals together to assure straight-line stops. Be sure to inflate all tires to the correct pressure.

Wear seat belts and never drink and drive. Do not use drugs or medications that may interfere with driving. Keep both hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road ahead. Travel at a low speed, especially on turns or curves and when

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- **Make sure there are slow moving vehicle emblems on all farm machinery.**
- **Use flashing warning lights on public roads.**
- **Drive farm machinery courteously and defensively on public roads.**

carrying heavy loads. Above all, obey all traffic laws, drive defensively and be courteous to other drivers.

Pulling Out and Driving on Public Roads

Always stop at the end of the driveway or lane and look both ways before pulling onto the road. Switch on the flashing lights. Adjust travel speed to road conditions. Special problems include snow and ice, bumps and ruts, highroad crowns, soft shoulders, narrow right-of-ways, gravel mounds and roadside obstacles. Signal slow-downs, stops, and turns. Avoid sudden, erratic or unexpected maneuvers. Before turning left, watch for cars that might try to pass. Never turn left immediately in front of oncoming traffic.

Extra safety must be taken when pulling loads on public roads. Pull only from the drawbar unless using hitch-mounted equipment. Make sure the hitch is sound and the load secured. Drive defensively and use the appropriate speed for the load and road conditions. Stay away from ditches and roadside obstacles. Watch for power

lines. Never operate attachments during transport. Keep the PTO lever in neutral.

If possible, move wide equipment during the day and when traffic volume is relatively low. Switch on all lights. If

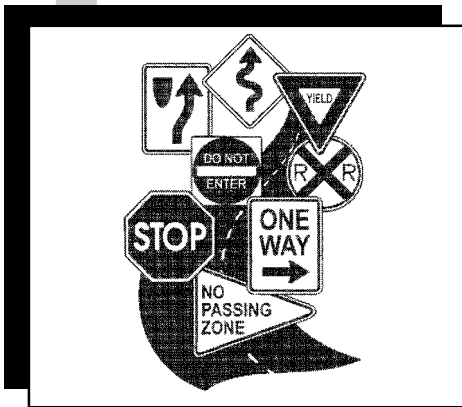
transporting equipment on a flatbed, make sure to comply with local and state highway regulations. Use an escort car or a lookout to help you on blind curves or bridges. Avoid sudden unexpected maneuvers, swerves, stops or turns. When you are a motorist and see a farm vehicle, slow and prepare to stop. Before passing, check for oncoming traffic and to the rear to see if someone is trying to pass you.

Drive tractors on the shoulder of paved highways, if possible. Do not drive with the tractor and machinery over part of the shoulder and part of the paved lane. If it is not possible to drive on the shoulder, drive on the paved lane. Do not force a line of cars or trucks to stay behind a slow moving tractor or machinery. If a suitable shoulder is available, pull over to permit traffic to pass.

Traffic signs at many rural intersections may be missing, damaged or hidden by vegetation. Always slow and prepare to stop at intersections, narrow bridges and all rural railroad crossings.

Animals

Watch for loose farm or wild animals on the road. Hitting them could cause a serious accident. People traveling through deer and moose country should be alert to crossing warning signs.



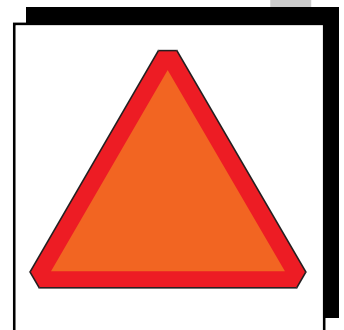
Slow-Moving Vehicle Emblems

Use flashing warning lights, a legible slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem and other lights to see and be seen on public roads. Replace your slow moving vehicle emblem centers every two years. The red reflective borders, for nighttime visibility, often last for seven or more years. The orange fluorescent centers, for daylight visibility, fade and last an average of only two years. Properly position SMV emblems two to six feet above the ground with the point up in the center of the vehicle. The SMV emblem color and shape are visible at a half mile in daylight.

Driving Farm machinery in the Fields

Drive at an appropriate speed when working in the fields. Watch out for slopes, ditches, rocks and other obstacles. Watch where you are going, especially at row ends and around trees. When coming to the row ends, slow the equipment down. Be alert to fence rows and make as wide a turn as possible. Apply a single brake in the direction of the turn, but only do this at a very slow speed. Quick, short brake-assisted turns can cause upsets.

Driving farm machinery on public roads is a must in Maine. Using extra caution and obeying the rules of the road will help to prevent accidents.





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This Maine Farm Safety fact sheet is part of an educational fact sheet series produced by University of Maine Cooperative Extension. For more information on farm safety, contact your county Extension office.

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