



**Farm Safety Association**  
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**Tailgate-Road**

## **Farm machinery safety on public roads**

**Instructor:** *The following script can be used to deliver a 15-minute training session to employees. You may wish to have a tractor and wagon on hand to point out safety requirements for road travel.*

*The text emphasizes important points related to farm safety on public roads. It is suggested that you try to stay strictly on topic. Obviously, you will need to be prepared to answer questions.*

### **POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:**

- **Check hitch connections, including safety chain.**
- **Use SMV signs and proper lighting to make farm equipment highly visible.**
- **Check the condition of *all* tires before heading out.**
- **Be courteous, and obey the traffic laws.**

#### **Know the dangers of highway travel**

Move farm equipment on public roads can be a dangerous business. Operators need to drive defensively and remain alert every second they are on the road.

Accidents can happen when farm equipment operators:

- lack the experience to handle the heavy, slow moving machinery.
- drive too fast, particularly when pulling a heavy load or turning.
- drive partially over the centre line.
- drive partially on the shoulder, and partially on the main road surface.
- run into a tree or other fixed object.

A major reason for farm machinery accidents on public roads is the difference in speed between cars and tractors. Motorists approach the slow moving farm equipment so quickly that they only have a few seconds to identify the hazard and react appropriately.

That's why it is so important for farm equipment to be highly visible, properly identified as moving much slower than regular traffic.

This identification is provided by the slow moving vehicle (SMV) sign. It must be:

- centred on the rear of the tractor or trailing equipment, between 60 cm and 1.8 metres above the road surface.
- clearly visible from a distance of 150 metres.

SMV signs must be kept clean. Faded or damaged signs should be replaced.

Tractors must be equipped with lights if operated on public roads at night, or under conditions of reduced visibility. Highway travel requires headlights, red tail lights, and reflectors. Flashing amber lights provide day and night warning to traffic approaching from either direction. Turn signals provide added highway safety. The more highly visible the equipment is, the better.

#### **Check everything *before* heading out**

You need to perform a complete check of both the tractor and trailed equipment before heading for the road.

1. Use safety-type hitch pins, and make sure they are securely fastened.
2. A safety chain must extend from the tractor to the frame of the towed equipment.
3. Check all tires (on both tractor and towed equipment) for air pressure, cuts and bumps.
4. **Always** lock brake pedals together for highway travel. Sudden braking on one wheel only at high speed could put the tractor into a dangerous skid.
5. Rearview mirrors, flares, and fire extinguishers should be standard equipment for tractors that are frequently driven on public roads.
6. Confirm that all lights are operating properly.
7. Make sure that the SMV sign is clean, unfaded, and properly mounted.
8. Check towed equipment. Any load should be balanced and properly secured. Make sure the towed load is light enough for the tractor to handle safely. Heavy wagons should be equipped with independent brakes.

#### **Safe driving tips**

Farm machinery operators can make road travel safer for themselves and others by taking the

following precautions.

- Avoid busy roads whenever possible, even if travel time will be longer.
- Travel at a speed that will allow you to maintain full control at all times.
- Slow down when making turns or rounding curves.
- Observe road travel precautions listed in operator manuals. Some tractors free-wheel in higher gears. This can be very dangerous when coming down a hill. Use lower gear ranges when climbing or descending hills.
- If possible, drive on the shoulder of a paved highway. However, don't drive partly on the shoulder and partly on the paved lane.
- Stay alert for hazards such as soft shoulders, narrow bridges, loose gravel, bumps, potholes, and deep ruts.
- When cars are lined up behind you, and a

suitable shoulder is available, pull over to let traffic pass.

- If possible, move equipment in daylight during periods of light traffic.
- Travel after dark only if absolutely necessary. Remember that you need proper lighting for night driving.
- Don't take chances by pulling onto a road in front of moving traffic. Enter and exit roadways very cautiously if your view is obstructed.
- Obey traffic laws and signs. **Courtesy is a key component of road safety!**

Are there any questions?

Finally, let's take a moment to review some of the "Do's" and "Don'ts" farm equipment safety on public roads.

**DO:**

Make sure that towed equipment is properly secured with a locking hitch pin and safety chain.

Always lock brake pedals together for road travel.

Slow down on curves, turns, and when pulling heavy loads.

Obey all traffic laws and signs.

**DON'T:**

Operate farm machinery on the road without an SMV sign.

Ever let a tractor "free-wheel" while traveling down a hill.

Pull onto the road in front of moving traffic.

Allow yourself to get angry at discourteous drivers.

The information and recommendations contained in this publication are believed to be reliable and representative of contemporary expert opinion on the subject material. The farm safety Association Inc. does not guarantee absolute accuracy or sufficiency of subject material, nor can it accept responsibility for health and safety recommendations that may have been omitted due to particular and exceptional conditions and circumstances.

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