

Harvest is Here: Stay Safe on the Roads

By the time you read this, I would bet a dangerous sum of money that you have seen some type of farm equipment on the road within the last two weeks. To the uninitiated and bet-winning recipients of my meager life-savings, we are in the throes of the busiest time of year on the farm: harvest.

Though harvest is top priority, many growers are simultaneously planting next year's crop. The logistical complexities (nightmares) of harvest and small-grain planting cannot be understated—combines, trucks and trailers going one direction while planters, seed-tenders and sprayers go the other.

Farmers will be using the roads often in the coming months as they transport equipment from field to field. Roads will be busy; autumn is filled with fun events and gorgeous weather. To avoid a two-lane, Prius v. combine confrontation, I think we can all use a reminder on how to share the road:

For Motorists:

- Slow down immediately when approaching farm equipment.
- If you cannot see the mirrors of the truck, tractor, or combine then the equipment operator cannot see you. Please give additional space to large equipment.
- Watch for the Slow Moving Vehicle emblem and be patient. Most farm equipment will only be traveling a short distance to the next field.
- Yield to wide vehicles. If a piece of farm equipment is traveling in the opposite direction, and you cannot pass safely, stop. Pull off to the side or turn onto a road or driveway so that both of you can get by safely.
- Only pass the farm equipment if you are in a passing zone and can clearly see into the oncoming lane of traffic ahead of you and the farm equipment.
- **Do not assume that farm equipment that pulls to the right side is making a right turn or letting you pass.** Farmers may need to make wide left turns. Watch for turn signals or hand signals. Do not pass until you know which way the farmer is going and it is safe to do so.
- Speaking of hand signals: an outstretched hand, often accompanied with a point, indicates a left turn while an arm crooked upward at a 90 degree angle indicates a right turn.



For Farmers:

- The Slow Moving Vehicle sign should be fully visible. Turn on your headlights, but leave the work-lights off while on the road.
- Avoid major roads during rush hour. When possible choose your harvest order to minimize trips—advisable both to avoid drivers and save expensive fuel.

- Harvest is dusty. A quick wipe of lights, mirrors and window glass can ensure necessary visibility in and out of the combine.
- It goes without saying but I will anyway: please do not drive down the road with the header still on the combine or chopper. However short it may be, you never know who might come around that corner at 50 miles per hour.

No matter which camp you fall into, let us remember to be kind to our fellow “countymen” this harvest season. Drive safe!

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