

Helping Your Fellow Highway Users See You!

Harvest season always comes with a safety message about important precautions on our rural highways. It's the season when farm machinery and other vehicles use the same two-lane highways. It's also the season when collisions between farm equipment and other vehicles occur more frequently.

These collisions are often the result of the speed differential between farm equipment and cars and trucks. On any rural highway, the closure distance and time between vehicles operating at 55 miles per hour and a farm tractor pulling grain wagons operating at 15 miles per hour can be very short. Many investigations of these incidents have shown that the driver did not allow distance between their vehicle and the farm equipment in order to react quickly enough to avoid the collision.

There are several important ways in which these incidents can be avoided. Slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblems should be prominently displayed on the back of tractors, wagons and combines using rural highways. They should not be faded or dirty and need to be placed in the line of the sight of vehicle operators. Most farm tractors and combines are equipped with lighting and marking that will make the equipment more visible. It should be used whenever the equipment is on the highway and must be maintained in good working condition in order to be effective.

Vehicle operators should be especially wary of farm equipment that they could encounter at any time. Lower natural light conditions, especially at dusk, are critical times on rural highways. When encountering farm equipment, vehicle operators should be prepared to stop to avoid a rear-end collision or to avoid a piece of machinery that turns left in front of them into a field or farmstead.

With a little extra patience, careful driving habits, and the use of emergency marking and lighting, many of the collisions between farm machinery and vehicles could be prevented during this fall's corn and soybean harvest.

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