

Agricultural Worker Transport

by Judy Kerry

State Compensation Insurance Fund

Agricultural workers use trucks, cars, station wagons, and buses as transportation on and off farms and fields in California. As with any motor vehicle, there is a risk of an accident and injury when using agricultural transport on the roadway. Agricultural workers need to know that there are safety rules for agricultural transport designed to keep them safe on the job.

Workers should make certain that the vehicle they are using is in good operating condition and meets the safety standards required by law. Transport vehicles require functional steering, working lights and turn signals, brakes, a leak-free fuel system, a horn, door latches, and tires with adequate tread. To provide good visibility, the vehicle needs mirrors (rear-view and side), a clean, functional windshield, and windshield wipers. For good ventilation, the exhaust system should discharge away from the passengers and the windows should be operable to allow fresh air.

The agricultural transport vehicle should have a certification sticker and a safety inspection sticker. The vehicle body should be free of openings and rust areas that may cause passenger injuries. Overloading of the vehicle should be avoided; the passenger load should not exceed the vehicle manufacturer's gross vehicle weight rating. There should be a proper seat and a seatbelt in the vehicle for every riding passenger.

Drivers of agricultural transport vehicles require a valid driver's license and should be familiar with the traffic rules for safe driving. Drivers should always wear their seatbelts. They should never operate a vehicle while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Drivers that are too sleepy or fatigued should not operate an agricultural transport vehicle.

Transport drivers should maintain a safe speed for the roadway by following posted signs. They should maintain a slower, safer speed for bad weather, traffic, and other road conditions. Care is required for roadway conditions that include uneven pavement, potholes, dirt and gravel roads, or other obstacles. Drivers should pay attention to the road and not get distracted by tasks like eating, talking to passengers, or talking on the phone. Extreme caution is required when crossing lanes of traffic, when turning, and while making U-turns.

With a properly working transport vehicle and a licensed and careful driver, agricultural worker transports can get workers to the fields and home again safely.