

## **Tractor Safety**

*by Judy Kerry*

*State Compensation Insurance Fund*

Tractors are useful tools that handle the heavy work required on farms and agricultural fields. Tractor accidents like rollovers, overturns, and runovers are the most frequent cause of agricultural injuries and fatalities. Due to their size and power, tractors should be used properly by trained and experienced operators.

Before operating a tractor, get training and review the operating manual. Inspect the tractor before each use. Report and immediately repair any broken parts or leaking fluids. There should be shields and guards on moving parts. Check that lights, controls, and gauges are working. Fill the gas tank when the engine is cold to avoid the risk of fire and explosion. Make sure the tractor is equipped with a fire extinguisher and first aid kit.

Remove loose jewelry, wear snug-fitting clothing, and secure long hair; this will prevent entanglement in any of the tractor's moving parts. Wear sturdy work gloves and boots. Consider hearing and eye protection depending on the job that you will be doing and how long you will be doing it.

When you mount the tractor, use the handrail and steps to prevent slips and falls. Adjust the seat so that you can comfortably reach the controls. If the tractor is equipped with Rollover Protective Structures (ROPS), put on your seatbelt. Follow the proper startup procedures for the tractor. Never start it indoors; carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas, can build up and cause injury and death.

To avoid a tractor accident, drive slowly, watch uneven terrain, and look out for other workers and animals. Rollovers can occur on flat land, but they are more likely near ditches, slopes, and uneven terrain. A tractor equipped with ROPS and a seatbelt can protect the driver from being thrown out of the tractor. Overturns can happen if the tractor attempts to pull something that is improperly hitched. Check the attached or mounted equipment; hitch pins and bolts should be secure.

Serious injuries and death can occur if the driver or a passenger falls off the tractor. Consider retrofitting tractors with ROPS and seatbelts. Ideally, tractors should have safety devices that stop them when the driver is not in the seat. Don't climb on or off moving tractors and never allow someone to hang onto the tractor for a "ride."

Before entering a roadway, make sure that the tractor has hazard headlights and a slow moving vehicle (SMV) warning device on it. Drive slowly at all times. Be wise - use tractors only for the tasks for which they were designed.