

Rural Roadway Safety

Rural Roadway Safety is something that all drivers need to be concerned with. This series of articles will focus on Rural Roadway Safety issues for farmers and people driving on America's rural roadways. Today's busy lifestyles seem to have people on the road and in a hurry to get at super-highway speed, but America's rural roadways are not equipped for that speed and therefore present several safety hazards to contend with.

Roads that were engineered decades ago can be narrow and winding, constructed of gravel, and have unguarded intersections and railroad crossings. On rural roads, drivers will find large farm equipment moving slowly from field to field and taking up a large portion of roadway.

People can be distracted from the primary responsibility of driving while texting or using hand-held and wireless phones, operating laptop computers, or visiting with passengers in the vehicle. Taking the attention of the driver off the roadway and diverting it to other items is dangerous on four lane roadways, and it can be deadly on the rural roads.

Farm equipment needs to be checked on a regular basis to ensure that all lighting and markings are in working order and visible to the motoring public. Farm equipment operators need to take heed when making left turns into fields and farmsteads. Farm operators should also use turn signals when a tractor or combine is so equipped and use hand signals for older equipment. Operators of farm equipment should always look behind before attempting a left-hand turn to be certain no vehicles are trying to pass them.

The motoring public needs to be aware that farm machinery will turn left into fields or farmsteads and to drive defensively when attempting to pass farm equipment. Remember: drivers may only pass farm equipment in designated "passing" zones; it is illegal to pass farm equipment in "no passing" zones. It may be difficult for farmers making a left-hand turn to see passing vehicles in their rear view mirrors if those following vehicles are too close. Taking time to pass safely can be the difference between life and death.

Leaving home a little earlier and allowing more time to make it to a destination can allow for a more pleasant drive that will be safer for drivers, passengers, and other vehicle operators who share the road.

