



Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, March 14 – 20, 2010

FACT SHEET #8

Invest in safety – invest in ROPS

Machinery incidents remain the leading cause of death and injury on Canadian farms. Tractor rollovers cause one in five work-related farm fatalities reports a study by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting program (CAIR).

On average, 115 people are killed and at least 1,500 are hospitalized for farm-related incidents in Canada each year according to CAIR. In 2006 alone a total of 13,801 Canadian farms reported one or more medically treated or lost time injuries, says Statistics Canada.

“*Plan • Farm • Safety*” is the theme of this three-year Canadian Agricultural Safety campaign. Each aspect of the theme will be promoted over the next three years. This year the campaign will promote “Plan” with safety walkabouts and planning for safety. In the second year, the focus will be on “Farm” including implementation, documentation and training. In the third year, emphasis will be on “Safety” including assessment, improvement and further development of safety systems.

The year-long “Plan” campaign will be launched with Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), from March 14 to 20. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) deliver CASW in partnership with Farm Credit Canada (FCC) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

“Safety is something that should never be compromised,” says Laurent Pellerin, CFA President. “By planning and investing in safety improvements, such as rollover protective structures, you are not only investing in your business, you are also protecting your most valuable resource – people.”

Deaths due to rollovers continue to occur despite the fact that rollover protective structures (ROPS) are commercially available as retrofits for virtually every tractor manufactured. Many tractors without a ROPS are still in use, and these are usually older model tractors or tractors that have had the protective structures removed. Retrofitting can pose a difficult decision because its cost for an older tractor can exceed the machine’s actual value. However, not having ROPS can cost you your life. Check with your local implement dealer for more information about retrofitting ROPS.

Never try to construct your own ROPS as there are too many variables in mounting and metal strength to design a rollover protection system that is guaranteed to protect you. In addition to having a certified rollover protective structure, a seat belt is a necessity. Without a seat belt, the operator may be flung from the safety of the ROPS into an area where the tractor may crush him or her.

Rear rollovers generally happen too fast for the operator to react. It only takes three-quarters of a second to reach the point of no return. Excessive throttle, pulling or towing things, and driving up steep inclines are among the situations that can cause a rear rollover.

Most rear rollovers are the result of changing the tractor's centre of gravity. Hitching above the drawbar or in a location not designated by the manufacturer increases the risk of a rear turnover.

Side turnovers are subject to many variations in tractor geometry, ballasting, tire slippage, operating speed, and ground roughness, making it impossible to give a "safe operating slope". However there are a several things you can do to make working on sloping fields safer:

- Always keep front-end loader equipment in the lowest position possible when in transport.
- Always slow down when turning.
- Tractor speeds should match surface conditions. Rough or uneven surfaces require reduced speeds.
- When working on a sloped surface, use a tractor with a wide front-end, and space the rear wheels as far apart as possible. Ballast wheels with weights or fluid.
- Lock brake pedals together when driving at transport speeds to ensure even braking.
- Shift to a lower gear before traveling downhill to let the engine and transmission reduce speeds.
- Use rear-view mirrors if you need to keep an eye on rear attachments or loads. Operators twisting to look over their shoulder can cause the tractor to swerve abruptly.
- Be sure the tractor and implements have adequate lighting and are equipped with a bright slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem whenever the tractor is driven on a public road.

More information on this and other farm safety topics is available at www.casa-acsa.ca or www.cfa-fca.ca .

- 30 -

For more information contact:

Theresa Whalen, CFA Farm Safety Consultant - T: (613) 822-0016 E: farmsafety@cfafca.ca

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