

See and Be Seen with Farm Equipment on Public Roads

Byline: Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

Regardless of what we're driving, safety on public roads is a responsibility we all share. Safety considerations when using public roads are essential since our actions – or inactions – can have consequences that affect others.

For farm equipment operators, regardless of where you work and live, one key safety consideration is ensuring that you can see and be seen.

For example, the [Government of Manitoba](#) reported that recent studies have shown that low visibility is responsible for a significant number of collisions between farm equipment and motor vehicles during the day. What's more, this finding is not unique to one province or territory.

Every light on farm equipment serves a specific purpose. And it's the operator's responsibility to ensure all lights are in proper working order **before** hitting the road and that the correct ones are used as required while travelling on public roadways.

While you know the size of your farm equipment, without proper lighting, it is hard for other drivers to comprehend the width, length, and position of your machinery. The correct lighting usage on farm equipment will help other motorists know what they are approaching.

Headlights

Tractors and other self-propelled equipment must have at least two working headlights. And all jurisdictions have a maximum number of standard headlights that can be on when operating on public roadways. These lights should be mounted at the same height and located between one and three metres from the ground.

While some equipment may come with plenty of field lights, using too many lights can be a safety hazard for other motorists by causing confusion and making it difficult for them to understand the size of the equipment they are approaching. That also includes not using flood lamps or general service lights in place of proper headlights.

Taillights

All newer tractors and self-propelled equipment come equipped with two red taillights mounted symmetrically and as far apart as possible. Towed implements may be required to have two red taillights.

Older equipment often did not come with affixed lighting, so you may need to install or use detachable lights that meet requirements.

Since taillights indicate to motorists following behind your equipment when you apply brakes, always keep them clean for optimal visibility and conduct routine checks to ensure they work correctly.

Warning Lights

Farm equipment is typically wider than most other vehicles on the roadway, so it's crucial to alert motorists to the width of your machinery. For tractors and self-propelled equipment, many jurisdictions require two amber lights that are visible from the machinery's front and rear. These warning lights need to be displayed at the widest part of the vehicle and must flash in unison.

The specific requirements for warning lights may vary by province based on equipment size, so it's best to check with your provincial transportation authority about the regulations in your area.

Turn Signals

As with any vehicle on public roadways, farm equipment operators must signal when turning.

Newer equipment will have turn signals that, when the turn indicator is on, the amber flashing warning light opposite of the turn direction stops flashing and becomes steady in order to eliminate confusion.

Keep in mind that signal indicators are not required on implements towed behind farm equipment unless the lights on the equipment are blocked from behind. If a towed implement doesn't allow other drivers to see your turn signals, make arrangements for an escort vehicle.

Flood Lamps and General Service Lamps

As mentioned, flood and general service lamps are not to be used in place of headlights or other compliant lighting systems when travelling on public roads.

Flood and general service lamps are designed to illuminate field work or the machine. As such, when travelling on public roads, these must be turned off, or, if they cannot be, they need to be aimed downward and away from traffic.

These bright lights can easily blind and disorient other motorists, which could lead to a collision with your farm equipment or other vehicles.

While these are general guidelines, you should always verify the exact regulatory requirements for farm equipment lighting in your area.

Safety on the road begins before you start driving by ensuring all components of your machinery are in working order. And remember - best practice when moving farm

equipment means being in compliance, planning your route (including considering the best time to travel) and arranging for pilot vehicles or persons to assist with highway traffic control.

After all, we all share the same public roads and the same goal: to get home safely at the end of the day. Making sure you can see and be seen when using farm equipment on public roads will help ensure that goal is a reality.

For more road safety information, please visit casa-acsa.ca/road-safety-week.