

Safety While Sharing the Road – It’s a Two-Way Street

Byline: Robert Gobeil for the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

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Too often, many of us overlook the fact that we might be sharing the road with agricultural equipment.

We hear of traffic incidents involving motor vehicles and agricultural equipment on public roadways every year. Unfortunately, many of these incidents have severe outcomes for motorists and farm equipment operators alike. In fact, according to Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting (CAIR) data, traffic collisions made up approximately 7% of all agriculture-related fatalities between 2003-2012.

Below are some tips to help keep everyone safe while sharing the road:

Motorists

- Spring planting and fall harvest time tend to see more agricultural equipment on roadways. But it’s important to keep an eye out all year long, especially when travelling in rural areas.
- Agricultural equipment travels a lot slower than regular traffic. That means a motor vehicle travelling at the speed limit can approach farm equipment more quickly than expected. Make sure to stay alert and slow down when approaching any farm machinery.
- Leave plenty of space behind farm equipment to allow for potential debris coming from the machinery. Keeping a distance will also help assess when it is safe to pass the equipment. If you can’t see the operator, they can’t see you – and may not know you’re there!
- We all know how easy it is to get impatient when driving behind a slow-moving vehicle. But only pass when it is safe to do so, and the operator can see you.
- When passing a piece of farm equipment, always follow the same road rules that apply when passing other motor vehicles, like never passing on a solid centre line or corner.
- Pay attention to turn signals and any hand signals from the operator.
- Tractors and other farm equipment need plenty of room to make left-hand turns. If the operator veers to the right, it might mean that they are about to make a left-hand turn – this is NOT an indication for the motorist to pass!

Agricultural Equipment Operators

- It’s best practice to use side roads instead of highways whenever possible, given the size and limited speed of farm machinery. Before heading out on the road, take time to plan your route.

- Ensure that all loads are secure and that your equipment won't leave debris on roadways or send projectiles towards motorists.
- Make sure your equipment has reflective materials and a Slow-Moving Vehicle (SMV) sign that are in good condition and visible. Be sure to replace these items as needed. Take care to check that all lights, beacons, and turn signals are clean and working properly before operating on any roadway.
- Use signals whenever you turn or change lanes.
- Know the width and height of your equipment and adjust mirrors as needed. This will help to ensure safe travel and clearance with potential obstructions such as road signs, overhead lines, and bridges.
- If you'll be transporting oversized loads/equipment or have to travel on high-speed roadways, use a pilot vehicle whenever possible. (NOTE: Some provinces have requirements regarding pilot vehicles, while others do not. Check with your provincial highway traffic legislation to verify requirements in your area.)
- Always wear a seatbelt when operating a tractor or other agricultural equipment.
- Keep in mind that anyone operating agricultural machinery on public roadways **must** possess a valid driver's licence and comply with traffic laws.

Remember that we all share the same public roadways. And that means we all have a responsibility to help ensure everyone makes it home safely.

More farm health and safety tips are available at casa-acsa.ca.