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Rural Road Harvest Safety Reminder



As harvest is upon us, the Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau® reminds motorists and farmers to be mindful when traveling roadways. We wish everyone a safe and successful harvest!

When driving, remain alert and aware of slow-moving vehicles and be prepared to stop quickly. During harvest season, motorists will encounter more large, slow moving vehicles on the road as well as vehicles and equipment parked on the side of the road. Slow down anytime you are going around curves or up hills. Quickly approaching a piece of farm machinery increases your likelihood of getting into an accident. Give yourself plenty of space by slowing down and being prepared. Also, be aware that farm machinery can enter a public road from a field or driveway, so keep your eyes alert.

Learn to recognize the SMV emblem. It alerts you that you are following a slow-moving vehicle, one that typically travels at less than 30 mph. It has a red-orange fluorescent triangle at its center, surrounded by a highly reflective red border. This sign is common on rural roads and drivers must heed its warning. When you see the SMV emblem - SLOW DOWN!

Farm tractors generally move at top speeds from 15 to 30 mph. When approaching from the rear, a car traveling at normal speed can overtake a slow-moving vehicle very quickly. Watch for SMV emblems and be patient. The driver should pull over to let you pass as soon as it's safe to do so. When driving farm equipment and semis, the bulky equipment and the sizable load can easily block part of the farmer's view, making it hard to see approaching vehicles. ***It is important to remember that if you do not see the driver, then the driver cannot see you.***

Many farmers haul their grain using semis. When a semi tractor-trailer is full of grain, it takes them longer to stop. Do not pull out in front of a moving semi. Also, do not follow farm equipment or semis too closely, as you want to see what is ahead (e.g. debris and other cars). Sometimes, farm equipment will take up more than one lane. These vehicles make big wide turns. When they are pulling to the side of the road, do not assume they are pulling over to allow you to pass. They may be preparing to turn. Watch for them to acknowledge your presence and signal their turn.

Tips on Passing Farm Machinery:

- Check to be sure that machinery is not turning left. Look for left turn lights or hand signals. If the machinery slows and pulls toward the right side of the road, the operator is likely preparing to make a wide left turn. Likewise, sometimes to make a right turn with wide equipment, the driver must fade to the left.
- Look for roadside obstacles such as mailboxes, bridges, or road signs that may cause the machinery to move to the center of the road. Fading to the left does not mean the farmer wants you to pass on the right.
- Be sure there is adequate distance for you to safely pass, and make sure the road is wide enough for your vehicle and the farm equipment.
- Only pass where it is legal. Do not pass if there is a solid yellow center line. Furthermore, do not pass near an intersection, railroad tracks, tunnels, or bridges. These areas can be particularly dangerous.

Source: Illinois Farm Bureau and Warren-Henderson Farm Bureau

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