

Extension TOW – Farm Safety – September 22, 2008

September 21-27 marks Farm Safety and Health Week. All of us need to remember farm vehicles will be out on the road as harvest gears up. October has nearly twice as many collisions as any other month. The most common time of day for collisions to occur is between 4 and 8 p.m. The most likely types of collisions are left turn and rear-end collisions. The left-turn collision happens when the farm vehicle is about to make a wide left turn and the vehicle behind begins to pass. Farm operators may swing to the right before making a left turn because they need the extra room to line up with a farm gate or driveway. Ask yourself, is the vehicle really turning? Check the operator's hand signals. Is there a turn signal? A flashing light on a tractor that suddenly stops flashing is a turn signal. Ask yourself is there a place he could turn? Check the left side of the road for gates, driveways, or any place a farm vehicle might turn.

The second most common incident is the rear end collision, where another vehicle approaches a slower- moving combine or tractor with a wagon load of grain and is unable to slow down. As soon as you see a slow moving vehicle, start to apply brakes like you would when approaching a stoplight. Remember to stay back at least 50 feet when following farm equipment. Most farm equipment is not designed to travel at speeds greater than 25 miles an hour.

Many collisions also occur when motorists pass farm vehicles. Some farm operators haul equipment that is extra wide or long, which motorists don't consider when they plan to pass. Be patient. Don't assume the farmer can move aside to let you pass. Shoulders may be soft, wet or steep, which can cause the farm vehicle to tip, or they may not be able to support a heavy farm vehicle. Remember, even if you have to slow down to 20 miles an hour and follow a tractor for two miles, it takes only about six minutes of your time, about the same as waiting for two stoplights.

This week and every week of the year, do your part in staying safe!!