

**INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY**  
**By Bill Arndorfer**  
**Grundy County Extension Education Director**  
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It is time for my annual fall safety reminders. Harvest season is an extremely busy time of year and that brings a hurriedness that may encourage farm equipment operators to take shortcuts when it comes to machine operation and repair. Fall safety concerns however, are not only an issue for farm operators but also for those who drive because farm machinery will be sharing the road with us. This column will discuss safety reminders that will benefit us all.

Forty seven percent of farm machinery injuries reported to the Iowa Department of Public Health in 1996 occurred in the months of August, September, October and November. Many of these injuries are the result of: individuals taking shortcuts while completing routine tasks, not getting enough rest, not taking regular breaks, and overlooking safety practices. About fifteen percent of the farm machinery related accidents reported were the result of slips and falls according to a report to the Iowa Department of Public Health. In 2000, slips or falls caused twenty percent of all agricultural injuries. Falling from a combine, for instance, to the ground or onto other machinery can result in back injuries, serious sprains, broken bones or even death.

To reduce the likelihood of falls, keep all platforms free of tools and other objects; frequently clean the steps and other areas where workers stand to service, mount or dismount or operate a machine; wear well fitting comfortable shoes with non-slip soles; use grab bars when mounting or dismounting machinery and be sure your position is stable before you work on a machine. Remember fatigue, stress, age, alcohol and other drugs may affect your stability.

I've briefly covered farm operator safety; let's focus for a moment on motorist safety. Farm machinery operators share the roadways with motorists. This time of year will result in more farm machinery on the roads. It is important for drivers to use extra caution and patience as they share the roadway. Drivers often do not realize how quickly they will overtake a tractor or piece of farm machinery. Misjudgments can result in collisions. Be sure to allow plenty of time to slow down and leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the machinery you are behind. Be aware that the equipment you are following, may be about to exit onto another roadway or farm drive.

Whether you are a machine operator or motorist, the best advice in keeping safe this fall is not to get into too big of a hurry. Allow extra time and be sure you are well rested. Make sure all safety equipment is in place and be aware of the traffic around you. September 18 through 24 has been designated National Farm Safety and Health Week. Let's use that week to think and practice safety to insure we have a safe harvest season!