

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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Think safety this harvest season! Whether you are operating harvest equipment or are a motorist sharing the roadways, it is important to be alert and exercise patience and caution as another harvest begins. The fall harvest season results in long work hours which can cause fatigue for equipment operators and motorists. Fatigue increases the risk for injuries. Sometimes in the rush of the season it is easy to feel hurried and take shortcuts in machine operation and repair. It is important to resist the temptation to become hurried and impatient.

Almost half of all farm machinery, tractor and fall injuries reported to the Iowa Department of Public Health (1996 data) occurred in the months of August, September, October and November. These injuries are often the result of individuals taking shortcuts to complete routine tasks, not getting enough rest, not taking regular breaks and overlooking safety practices.

In 2000, slips and falls accounted for twenty percent of all agricultural injuries. A fall from a combine platform, for example, can result in back injuries, serious sprains, broken bones or even death. Therefore, keep platforms free of tools or other objects, clean steps and other platform areas of mud and debris, wear comfortable shoes with non-slip soles, use grab bars when mounting or dismounting equipment and be sure you are standing on a stable surface when working on the machine. Factors such as stress, fatigue, age, alcohol and other drugs can affect your stability, judgment and reaction time.

Motorists must exercise caution and patience when approaching or following farm machinery. Drivers often times do not realize how quickly they will overtake a tractor or other piece of farm machinery. Allow plenty of time to slow down and leave plenty of room between your vehicle and the equipment you are following. Also, be alert to the fact that the equipment you are following may be about to exit onto another roadway or farm drive. All farm equipment operated on the roadways should have the proper warning signs and lights displayed and in operating condition.

The best safety advice for all of us 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 17 through 23 has been designated National Farm Safety and Health Week. Let's use that time to think, prepare and practice safety! For more information, contact the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.