

Being a Driving Force for Safety on Your Tractor

While every harvest season is important to Ontario farmers, 2021 stands apart. The challenges associated with COVID 19 have been felt every step of the way. That said and as tempting as it might be, fast-tracking processes to make up for lost ground should not include any less attention to safety. This includes the operations of tractors on roadways.

“It’s one thing to work quickly, something else entirely to rush,” says Sergeant Kelly Prebble of the Rural Division, Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS). “And this includes our approaches to the fundamentals.”

Things like regular equipment checks must be sustained, especially when tractors are being used around the clock. This includes monitoring tire pressure, lights and brakes. It’s important to make sure that implements being towed are also road-ready with hitches, pins and drawbars in good shape and secured properly.

Ensure Slow Moving Vehicle Signage is Visible

The same goes for Slow Moving Vehicle signage. It may be perfectly visible when tractors are being operated on their own but obscured by wagons they may be towing. Do an extra check after the wagon is loaded as well.

“Road awareness is not just about your approach to driving,” says Prebble. “Many people are inexperienced on the road in farm country and prone to distracted driving. The concept of defensive driving needs to be top of mind. A high percentage of collisions involve farm vehicles making left turns. Don’t assume the driver in the car behind you has ever shared the road with a tractor.”

Along with being mindful of others, we need to be mindful of ourselves and our own readiness for duty behind the wheel of a tractor. There are situations when time is of the essence and, along with readying our equipment, we have to be aware of our own physical and mental condition.

Harvest Season Requires Extra Vigilance

“Harvest season can be a twenty-four hour a day process,’ notes Prebble. “Factors like visibility are worse at night and we are far from our sharpest if we’ve been up and working since dawn.” Fatigue is a leading cause of crashes and can cause us to perform even small tasks carelessly, let alone the operation of a multi-ton tractor.

And distracted driving is not just about texting while driving. We can be mentally distracted by our own thoughts wandering to stressors we may be dealing with, more so in these COVID times, be they financial, personal or otherwise. Make sure you’re alert and ready to focus before setting out.

Rural Road and Farm Safety Video Campaigns

WRPS has a *Rural Road Safety* video campaign has gotten great feedback and achieved over 1.5 million impressions and 350,000 views. You can view these videos at <http://wsps.news/WRPS>

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS) has created a very effective series of farm safety instructional videos that are posted on YouTube. Topics include preventing tractor rollovers, runovers, staying safe when working alone, preventing machinery entanglement and of course, rural road safety. You can view these videos at <http://wsps.news/FarmVideos>

In addition, the Ministry of Transportation has a comprehensive *Farm Guide to Farm Equipment on the Highway*. It has been developed to provide general information and clarification for laws applying to farm equipment. You can view this Guide at <http://wsps.news/MTOGuide>