

## News Release

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### **MnDOT asks motorists, farm equipment operators to safely share the road during harvest season**

**ST. PAUL, Minn.** — Motorists traveling on Minnesota highways this fall need to be aware of large farm equipment transporting crops to markets, grain elevators and processing plants, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

“Harvest season is getting in full swing across the state and farmers and their equipment are out on the highways,” said Jay Hietpas, state traffic engineer. “Motorists need to be prepared to encounter slow-moving farm vehicles, especially on rural, two-lane roads.”

Farm equipment is large and heavy, making it hard for operators to accelerate, slow down and stop. The equipment also makes wide turns and sometimes crosses over the center line. In addition, farm vehicles can create large blind spots, making it difficult for operators to see approaching vehicles. All of these factors can cause serious crashes.

From 2011 to 2015, there were 688 crashes involving farm vehicles that resulted in 23 fatalities and 348 injuries. Nearly half of the fatalities were an occupant of the farm vehicle.

“Twenty-two percent of all farm equipment crashes and 29 percent of the fatalities were distraction-related,” Hietpas said. “Other factors were speed-related and alcohol-related.”

Motorists should:

- Watch for debris dropped by trucks hauling sugar beets and other crops. It is safer to brake or slowly drive through debris than to veer into oncoming cars or off the road.
- When approaching farm equipment, slow down and use caution. Put additional space between your vehicle and the farm equipment ahead. Don’t assume the equipment operator can see you.
- Be patient and wait for a safe place to pass.
- Wear seatbelts.
- Drive with headlights on at all times.

Farm equipment operators should:

- Use lights and flashers to make equipment more visible.
- Use slow-moving vehicle emblems on equipment traveling less than 30 mph.
- Drive slow-moving vehicles in the right-hand lane as close to the edge of the roadway as possible.
- Consider using an escort vehicle when moving equipment, especially at night and if the equipment is large enough that it may extend across the center line.
- Avoid encouraging or signaling motorists to pass. Pull over when safe, and let traffic pass.
- Pick up any debris left on the highway by the equipment or contact MnDOT to remove it.
- Plan their routes so wide equipment will not hit or damage signs, guardrails, light poles and other roadway structures.

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