

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN

June 9, 2020

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HARVEST SAFETY

Our local farmers are gearing up for harvest. Because we live in a rural area, many of our local citizens are affected by harvest, and not just because they have a job that is related to agriculture. Harvest means lots of big farm equipment on the roads, and increased risk. If you are driving in Cowley County (or, Kansas, really) in the coming weeks, this is your friendly reminder to be mindful of your surroundings for your safety and the safety of our local agricultural producers. Farm safety is for everyone- not just our farm families.

Farmers and farm workers can make a few preparations to help avoid a serious accident. Be rested. This can sometimes be difficult as weather and other factors contribute to the need to get the crop out of the field in a timely manner. However, being overtired creates an impaired mental state which makes operating heavy equipment safely difficult. Take breaks throughout the day, giving your body and mind a chance to recuperate. Stay hydrated and don't skip meals. Dehydration and hypoglycemia can be more dangerous than you realize. When possible, avoid moving equipment on the road during at sunrise and sunset when visibility is limited. Carry a first-aid kit with a tourniquet. These tools save lives and limbs. Of injured people who die from blood loss, half die within 30 minutes. Learn how to use the first-aid kit correctly, and make sure all workers are trained in basic first-aid. Follow best management practices, respecting recommended usage of safety mechanisms and shields on your equipment. Create a plan and share it with your team. Employ a safety check-in process and share how long you plan to work and set ongoing check-in times, so someone knows whether or not you're OK.

Rural citizens should expect to encounter farm machinery on the road during harvest. Remain alert while driving during harvest season. Be prepared to reduce speeds or stop immediately upon meeting slow-moving farm vehicles and farming areas. Remember that as farmers begin to move machinery from field to field, they may be traveling at speeds of 25 mph less and need additional roadway space. It is crucial for everyone's safety to have patience and share the road. Allow yourself extra time to travel, especially if you know you'll be traveling through harvest areas. Be patient and maintain a safe following distance when you encounter equipment on the roadway. Do not attempt to pass machinery unless you are certain it is safe and legal to do so. If you are passing farm equipment, check to be sure the farmer is not turning right or left. Look for turn signals. If the farmer pulls toward the right side of the road and slows down, they are probably preparing to make a wide left turn. Likewise, sometimes the farmer must move to the left to make a right turn with wide farm equipment. Before passing, ensure that the road is wide enough to pass safely and be alert for roadside obstacles including bridges, road signs or mailboxes that may cause machinery to move to the center of the road. During harvest, it is especially important to limit distractions while driving. Stay off your cell phone and avoid texting.

We can all remember to be patient and courteous to help insure a safer harvest. For more information about local agriculture contact Kelsey Nordyke (klNordyke@ksu.edu) or call 620-221-5450.