

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN
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2020 NATIONAL FARM SAFETY WEEK - "EVERY FARMER COUNTS"

In the United States, there are about 3.4 million agricultural producers, which account for just one percent of the total U.S. population. To bring awareness and attention to the challenges that farmers have faced in the last two years, the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) has chosen the theme, "Every Farmer Counts" for the 2020 National Farm Safety Week taking place September 21-25. Farmers and ranchers feed and clothe the world, which is why it is especially important to focus on them during National Farm Safety Week.

U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics data from 2018 indicates that agricultural jobs are still the most dangerous in our nation, with 23.4 deaths for 100,000 workers. We are in fall harvest time in Kansas, which can be one of the busiest and most dangerous seasons in rural communities for both farm operators and rural citizens. The third week of September is recognized nation-wide as National Farm Safety and Health Week. National Farm Safety and Health Week was initiated by the National Safety Council and has been proclaimed by every sitting U.S. President since Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1944. Each day throughout the week is assigned a topic of focus and webinars are provided each day at noon CDT on the AgriSafe Network NFSHW webpage (learning.agrisafe.org).

In addition to promoting awareness for agricultural safety, rural citizens can promote better health and safety practices throughout harvest season to keep our farmers safe. Expect to encounter farm machinery on the road during harvest. Remain alert while driving during this 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. Remember that the person driving that tractor or combine is someone's mother, father, sister or brother and they may even be your neighbor and they're working to feed and clothe the world.

For more information about National Farm Safety Week, visit necasag.org. Additional information about local agriculture programs is available from Cowley County Extension, 620-221-5450 or email Kelsey Nordyke (knordyke@ksu.edu).

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