

Farm Tractor Road Safety

HS94-043H (9-07)

Goal

This program provides information to tractor operators on the safe operation of tractors while on public roads.

Objective

Tractor drivers will understand vehicle requirements, general traffic rules and responsibilities for operating tractors on public roads.

Background

Defensive driving is critical to the safety of operators who move farm equipment on public roads. Accidents are likely to happen if the tractor operator:

- Lacks the experience to handle heavy, slow moving machinery,
- Drives too fast, especially when pulling a heavy load or turning,
- Drives partially over the center line,
- Drives partially on the shoulder and partially on the road surface, or
- Runs into a tree or other fixed object.

A major cause of tractor accidents on public roads is the difference in speed between cars and tractors. The higher rate of speed results in the motorist approaching the tractor so quickly that they have only a few seconds to identify the hazard and react appropriately. In an effort to reduce tractor-car accidents various regulations and laws have been enacted.

All Texas traffic laws apply to tractor operators using public roads even though a driver's license is not required. Each operator must know Texas traffic laws as well as safe operating procedures for the equipment they use.

The following are specific requirements for farm tractors or equipment operating on public roads.

Signage

Locate a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem on the rear of the tractor or equipment so it can be clearly seen by vehicles approaching from the rear. When towing a trailer or other equipment that blocks the tractor emblem, an additional SMV must be attached and visible on the towed equipment. This requirement applies to all farm equipment operating at or below 25 m.p.h..



Lighting

- Farm tractors are required to have two forward facing headlights and a red taillight that burns continuously. This tail light must be visible for 500 ft. under normal conditions and mounted on the far left side of the tractor.
- Towed equipment requires two rear mounted red reflectors positioned at the extreme left and right.
- Farm tractors and equipment require hazard-warning lights (flashers) when operating on public roads. White or amber flashers are mounted on the front, and red or amber on the rear. These lights must be activated when the vehicle is in operation.

Miscellaneous

Cleats, lugs, flanges, studs, spikes or any other extensions of the wheel rim that could damage the road surface are unlawful on public roads. However, tire chains are allowed.

General Traffic Rules

Farm tractors and equipment operating on public roads must obey all traffic lights and signs. They must also follow these safe operating procedures.

Vehicle Operation

- Use the turn indicator or a hand signal when changing lanes, making a turn, pulling onto a road, or slowing down to stop.
- Signal at least 100 ft. before turning or stopping.
- Make sure signals can be seen easily.
- Equip the tractor with turn signals if driving after dark.

Right of Way at Intersections

- When driving on a single- or two-lane road that intersects with a multi-lane road, traffic on the smaller road must yield right-of-way to vehicles traveling on the multi-lane road.
- When driving on an unpaved road that intersects a paved road, traffic on the unpaved road must yield right-of-way to vehicles traveling on the paved road.
- When turning left, oncoming traffic has the right-of-way.
- When leaving a private road, traffic on the private road must yield right-of-way to vehicles traveling on the public road.
- When traveling a road that ends at a through street, traffic on the intersecting street must yield right-of-way to vehicles on the through street.

Turning

- Never make a last minute turn.
- Give the proper turn signal at least 100 ft. before you make your turn.
- Look behind and to both sides to determine where other vehicles are before making a turn.
- Move into position for the turn at least one-half block prior to doing so or continue until the next turn can be safely negotiated.
- Apply the brakes while slowing down for the turn, not during the turn itself.
- Make and complete the turn in the correct lane.

Parking

- Always use warning flashers and other lights to signal your intentions.
- Do not park closer than 50 ft. to a railroad crossing.
- Leave plenty of room for others to pass when parking on the side of the road.
- Be sure that farm implements are parked completely off the road.

Equipment Condition

Inspect all equipment prior to operation. Review the following questions:

- Is the equipment maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications?
- Is the machinery equipped with an operational 2A-10 B: C-rated dry chemical fire extinguisher and an adequately stocked first-aid kit?

- Does equipment lighting work and conform to state laws?
- Are the brakes operational and in good condition?
- Are the tires in good condition and properly inflated?
- Are hitches sturdy?
- Are safety chains available for use with towed equipment?
- Are wagons equipped with brakes?
- Are all shields or guards in place?
- Are seat belts installed on all tractors with rollover protection?
- Is the use of these seat belts mandatory?
- Are SMV emblems mounted on all equipment used on public roads?
- Are SMV emblems mounted where they can be clearly seen by vehicles approaching from the rear?
- Are SMV emblems clean?
- Are SMV emblems replaced when damaged or faded?

Operator Responsibilities

If an operator is impaired by the use of drugs, alcohol, prescription drugs or fatigue, he places his life and the lives of others in danger. While operators are exempt from the licensing portion of the law, they are not released from liability resulting from improper or illegal acts.

Review

1. What emblem is mandatory by state law to be affixed to the rear of farm tractors or equipment operated on a public road?
 - a. A patriotic American Flag.
 - b. A slow moving vehicle emblem.
 - c. A do not pass sign.
 - d. A vehicle makes frequent stops sign.
2. By state law, what hazard warning lights are required on tractors operated on public roads?
 - a. Amber or white lights on the front and amber or red lights on the rear.
 - b. Red or white lights on the front and amber lights on the rear.
 - c. Amber lights on the front and red or white lights on the rear.
 - d. Amber or red lights on the front and amber or white lights on the rear.

3. At what distance should you signal prior to turning?
 - a. 10 feet
 - b. 20 feet
 - c. 50 feet
 - d. 100 feet
4. How far from a railroad track should you park a piece of farm equipment?
 - a. 10 feet
 - b. 20 feet
 - c. 50 feet
 - d. 100 feet
5. Who has the right-of-way when traveling from a dirt road to a paved road?
 - a. Traffic on the dirt road.
 - b. Traffic that is dirty.
 - c. Traffic on the paved road.
 - d. Farm equipment always has the right-of-way.

The Texas Department of Insurance,
Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI, DWC)
E-mail resourcecenter@tdi.state.tx.us
or call 1-800-687-7080 for more information.

Answers:

1. b 2. a 3. d 4. c 5. c

References

National Ag Safety Database, *Farm Machinery Safety On Public Roads*, 2002.

Texas Department of Public Safety, *Texas Drivers' Handbook*, October 2004.

Resources

The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (TDI, DWC) Resource Center offers a workers' health and safety video tape library. Call (512) 804-4620 for more information or visit our web site at www.tdi.state.tx.us.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this training program is considered accurate at time of publication.

Safety Violations Hotline
1-800-452-9595
safetyhotline@tdi.state.tx.us