



Farm Tractor Safety

The High Plains Intermountain Center for Agricultural Health and Safety

Today's farmers and Agricultural workers are exposed to many on-the-job hazards, which result in a death rate five times greater than all other industries averaged together.

- 52 fatalities for every 100,000 workers
- Nearly half of these involve tractors
- 300 tractor fatalities annually

Rollover Causes

Of all tractor related deaths, 50-60% are due to tractors rolling over and crushing the operator. Many of these accidents may be prevented by not:

- Driving too fast
- Going over bumpy ground
- Driving into ditches
- Hitching high for extra traction
- Driving on steep slopes
- Being careless with front-end loaders

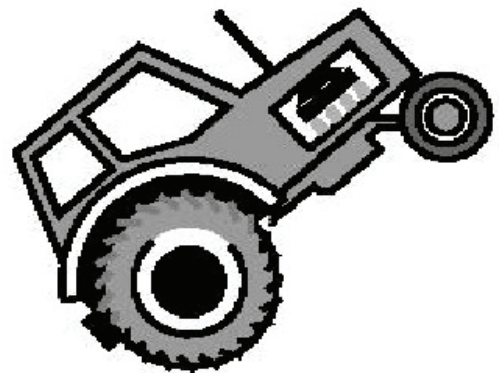
Rollover Protection Structure (ROPS)

Despite efforts to avoid rollovers, they still will happen. Therefore, it is important to use a rollover protection structure whenever possible.

- ROPS can prevent most overturn deaths
- Wearing a seat belt with ROPS equipped tractor is essential
- Never wear seat belt when operating a tractor not equipped with ROPS
- Many older tractors can be retrofitted with ROPS

To Keep the risk of rollover at a minimum, here are some guidelines to follow when operating a tractor.

- Keep wheels spread wide whenever possible
- Reduce speed when turning corners
- Reduce speed when using a loader
- Travel with bucket low
- Be careful when driving up or on an incline
- Back up steep slopes
- Keep tractor in gear when going down hill
- Engage clutch gently especially when on an incline
- Do not use tractor for jobs it wasn't designed for



Passengers

Another high percentage of tractor-related deaths, 20-25%, occurs when passengers or the operator fall off moving tractors and/or are run over.

Never allow passengers to ride:

- on tractor
- in bucket of loader
- on tongues

- on towed equipment

Because:

- Passenger can be thrown off tractor
- Passengers may obstruct driver's view
- Passengers can bump, or get in the way of controls
- Most tractors are not designed to have passengers

Safety Checklist

It is always a good idea to have farm tractor safety rules. A checklist may include (but is not limited to) the following:

Before Operating Tractor

- Require the completion of a tractor safety course for all young farmers and new employees
- Read tractor's operator's manual
- Be supervised by experienced operator
- Follow operating, maintenance, and safety recommendations
- Walk around tractor checking for bystanders and hazards before operating
- Be sure that all shields and guards are in place
- Never refuel tractor while engine is running
- Always fuel tractor outside and store fuel outside
- Be sure of good ventilation before starting tractor
- Keep small children away from tractors
- Never operate tractor under the influence of drugs or alcohol

While Operating Tractor

Only operate the tractor and its hydraulic system from the seat and cab area

- Wear seat belt with ROPS equipped tractors
- Steer clear of rollover hazards
- Never allow passengers on tractor
- Make sure a clean and reflective slow-moving vehicle sign is installed on the rear of tractor and towed equipment
- Flashing hazard lights and reflectors are recommended
Pull off road onto wide, flat shoulder to let cars pass
- Tractor should be equipped with a first aid kit and fire extinguisher (minimum 5 lb. ABC rated)
- Do not wear loose clothing while operating tractor
- Wear hearing protection if tractor does not have a sound-proof cab
- Disengage power-take-off (PTO) before getting off tractor
- Always remove keys from tractor when not in use



Even though tractors are involved in nearly 50 percent of all agriculture-related deaths, the tractor need not be such a dangerous vehicle. In fact, several studies have shown that there have been no deaths in a rollover of a tractor equipped with a ROPS. By using a ROPS and seat belt, and not allowing passengers on the tractor at any time, a very large portion of all tractor-related deaths can be prevented. It takes some discipline to follow these safety tips to reduce risks, but your family may be glad you did.

