

Motor Vehicle Safety

Many agricultural worker fatalities involve operating or riding in motor vehicles, according to a recent study. Agricultural employees who ride in the open bed of a pickup on public roads pose an especially high risk.

Evaluate your driving habits. Know the rules of the road and concentrate at all times while driving. Monitor your speed and the actions of other drivers.

TRUE STORY

An agriculture chemical company employee was driving the company truck, pulling an ammonia tank. The lower prong of the pinhole hitch fractured. The bouncing motion, along with the swaying of the truck, caused the pin to bounce straight up and out of the remaining pinhole prong. This separated the truck from the tank. The driver lost control of the vehicle and, after hitting a utility pole, it spun into the oncoming traffic lane and then veered off the road. It came to a rest upside down in a field. Thrown through the driver's side door window, the driver lay several feet from the vehicle. He hadn't worn a seat belt. The driver sustained a fractured left shoulder and a cracked third vertebra in the neck.

What could have prevented this accident?

- Always wear your seat belt when operating a motor vehicle.
- Inspect vehicles and towing equipment prior to use, including hitches, hitching pins and safety chains.
- Adjust speeds to road conditions.

Safe Driving Tips

- Always wear your seat belt. It can save your life - and it's the law!
- Never use alcohol or illegal drugs at work. Never drink and drive. Even small amounts of alcohol can impair your driving.
- Note changing weather conditions and adjust your speed accordingly.
- Maintain a safe following distance of three car lengths from other vehicles.
- Pay special attention when driving farm equipment on public roads. Make your farm vehicle highly visible by turning on lights and flashers, attaching a "Slow Moving" emblem to farm equipment, and affixing red caution flags to machinery that juts out of your vehicle. When possible, use a pilot vehicle.
- Transport workers over public roads only in vehicles with adequate seats and restraints.

EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer:

- Check that all vehicles are in safe working condition. Follow a maintenance program to inspect farm vehicles regularly.
- Ensure that all operators undergo initial training in motor vehicle operation safety. Periodically check their licenses for current status.
- Monitor employees' driving habits. Review DMV records at specified intervals.
- Attach "Slow Moving" warning emblems to farm equipment to increase their visibility to 25 feet.

Employee:

- Inspect vehicles daily. Check oil, water, headlights, tires, mirrors, brakes and wipers.
- Notify supervisors of vehicles that need repairs.
- Always wear your seat belt.
- Never use alcohol or illegal drugs at work. Never drink and drive. Prescription drugs can cause drowsiness, so check the label.
- Operate only those farm vehicles that you're authorized to drive.
- Keep your employer informed of changes in your driving or licensing status.
- Check that "Slow Moving" vehicle emblems are clearly visible on farm equipment before driving on the road.
- Obey all traffic laws.

Zenith provides workplace safety resources at: **TheZenith.com**[®]