

Tractor Safety

TRACTORS

Improper operation of tractors accounts for the highest percentage of incidents on farms. This includes excessive speed, driving on too steep an incline, inexperienced or immature drivers, and operators under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Spending hour after hour in the field can become monotonous and, in some cases, can lead to carelessness. Prevention techniques are a must if one is to work safely with tractors, implements and trailers. Taking a few precautions and observing safety rules can prevent injury, or even save your life.

GENERAL SAFETY

A good operator needs to be trained to practice these safety procedures:

- Before operating a tractor, read and follow safety procedures in the manufacturer's manual.
- Be sure the tractor is properly set up with roll-over protection and seat belts in working order. Wear seatbelts when provided.
- When mounting and dismounting the tractor, use the provided hand rails and use 3 points of contact.
- Always turn off the tractor engine when fueling.
- Carry a first aid kit and dry chemical extinguisher on the tractor.
- Do not allow riders. Tractors are designed to carry only the driver.
- Keep small children away from tractors. Each year, children are injured or killed as a result of falling from the tractor.
- Use extra care when driving up an incline. Backing up the slope is recommended to ensure the center of gravity remains at a point to prevent rollover.
- Balance your load, including the weight of the load on a trailer or spreader, and keep wheels spread wide whenever possible.
- Reduce speed before turning, especially when using a loader. Keep loader bucket as low to the ground as possible to maintain a low center of gravity.
- Always hitch to the drawbar. Never hitch to the axle or other high point. Keep the hitch as low as possible, preferably 17 inches, and never above a height of 21 inches.
- Stop the engine before dismounting the tractor. People are injured and killed each year as the result of being run over by a tractor.
- If it is necessary to jump start a dead tractor, be sure to use the proper equipment and procedures. Make sure jumper cables are in good working condition.
- Shield moving parts. Shields and guards provided by the manufacturer should be kept in place at all times, except for servicing. This includes power take-off (PTO). If guards are removed for servicing, be sure they are put back in place before using equipment.
- Keep a tractor in gear when going downhill, allowing the engine to serve as a brake.
- Never attach a post or log to the rear wheels when the tractor is stuck in the mud.

- When turning use precaution, a tractor can pivot around an axle and flip over.
- To prevent eye injury due to flying debris or low lying branches, wear eye protection.

POWER TAKE OFF SHAFTS (PTO)

Operating power take off shafts (PTO) is the cause of many incidences every year. The PTO comes with protective shields. It is absolutely critical that PTO shields be kept in place. An unguarded shaft, running at 1000 rpm, can wrap material, such as clothing, around it at the rate of eight feet per second.

WAGONS/TRAILERS

There are a number of incidents involving the use of wagons and trailers on farming operations. Nearly half of all wagon injuries result from persons falling off. The following rules will help to reduce wagon injuries:

- Keep wagons and trailers in good repair. Never use a wagon with cracked stringers. Broken rack boards and protruding nails or bolts can cause injuries.
- Make sure that tires are properly maintained and have the appropriate air pressure.
- Block wagon wheels before unhitching. Stand beside the wagon tongue when hitching or unhitching, never between the tractor hitch and wagon.
- Always use a safety hitch pin.
- Keep hands clear of clevis area of the tongue until the tractor has stopped moving. Use implement stands to reduce the need to lift the tongue.
- When transporting on public roads, use a safety chain.
- Do not allow riders. Don't allow anyone to ride a wagon.

IMPLEMENTS

Implements may have moving parts and themselves cause injury. Pay attention to the following:

- Guard all nip, pinch, shear and pull-in points.
- Never adjust, clear, clean or repair implements while running. If this must be done, carefully follow procedures outlined in the operator's manual. Proper lockout/blockout procedures should also be followed.
- Be careful of free wheeling parts -- watch and listen for motion.
- Recognize stored energy in springs, hydraulic systems, raised loads, etc. Follow your operator's manual in releasing this stored energy.
- Know the terrain and plan accordingly.
- Reduce speed to idle, turn off the engine and set the brake before dismounting any equipment or machinery.

SUMMARY

The most important point of tractor safety is to know your tractor, its implements and how they work. However, no amount of knowledge will protect you from an incident occurring if your tractor is not properly serviced and maintained in good condition. A pre-use checklist is a good idea.

Please contact your Zenith Safety & Health Consultant for further assistance.

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