



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/agriculture-roadway-safety>

Note to editors: A photo to accompany this story is <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/41843997532>

Released: Nov. 8, 2024

On the Road? Mind the combine this fall

K-State expert shares how to prevent accidents when roading farm equipment

By Jacob Klaudt, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — With fall harvest coming to a close, crop growers and motorists more often find themselves in a scenario similar to the hit Craig Morgan song, “International Harvester,” as combines come off of fields and onto pavement.

“... hard workin’ combine driver hoggin’ up the road on my p-p-p-p-plower, chug a lug a luggin’ 5 miles an hour, on my International Harvester.”

Yet, as the interactions between farm equipment and automobiles increase, so does the risk of accidents and injury, said K-State assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Ed Brokesh.

“When there is a collision with machinery on main roads, most of the time somebody is traveling at a higher rate of speed that greatly contrasts that piece of equipment, causing a rear-end or side-swipe incident; 39% of the time it is a tractor,” he said.

Wrongful passing events and left-hand turns are other dangerous events for passenger vehicles. According to Brokesh, these situations become hazardous due to the size and weight differential between a tractor and a car, for instance.

“The smaller party is the one that is going to take the brunt of the damage,” he said. “The harm – a fatality or injury – is usually to those in the pickup, car or utility vehicle.”

The damage associated with these incidents emphasizes the need for experienced operators behind the wheel of big machinery, Brokesh said.

“Commonly, younger or less-skilled drivers are involved in roading accidents,” he said. “Those who are under 16 or are a newly hired hand are more likely to get into trouble.”

To lower the chance of these events during roading, or the movement of machinery between fields on main roads, Brokesh recommends that producers implement a minimum age rule for their workforce.

“If someone is unfamiliar with a piece of equipment, let’s just not send them out on the road,” he said. “I would argue that we need to have people roading machinery that possess a driver’s license, or at minimum, a learner’s permit.”

Operations should also mandate a new employee training, according to Brokesh.

“Don’t just point to the tractor and say to a new hiree ‘go figure it out.’ That is just asking for trouble,” he said. “Take some time with them and explain the equipment and how they should operate it on the road and in the field.”

Other safety strategies Brokesh advises producers to employ:

1. Drive defensively.
2. Pay extra attention to the motorists in the rear-view mirror.
3. Properly mark equipment.
4. Clean off light reflectors.
5. Replace faulty lighting systems.

Still, safety for agriculturists and the driving public is a “two-way street.”

“As an industry, we need to advocate for more training involving agricultural equipment on roads,” Brokesh said. “Educating all motorists on how to drive safely with equipment on roads will lower the risk of accidents for everyone.”

More information on properly marking and lighting machinery is available through the [Association of Equipment Manufacturers](#).

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Association of Equipment Manufacturers, www.aem.org

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Story by:
Jacob Klaudt
jbklaudt@ksu.edu

More information:
Ed Brokesh
785-532-2907
ebrokesh@k-state.edu