

Sharing the Road with Farm Equipment

The weather is warming and this is the time of year when farmers return to the fields to plant crops, which sometimes requires driving some large farm equipment on public roads.

In order to promote safer driving practices on rural roads, the following is some advice to follow:

Recognize the slow-moving vehicle emblem and brake immediately. When you see the slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem, you should immediately slow down. SMV emblems must be visible at least 500 feet away from the vehicle, but because it may be difficult for you to judge the speed at which you are closing in on a vehicle, you should slow down immediately. Think of the slow-moving vehicle emblem as a warning to adjust your speed.

Be Patient. A farmer understands that your trip is being delayed, so he or she will pull off the road at the first available safe location to allow you to pass. Don't assume that the farmer can move aside to let you pass. Shoulders may be soft, wet or steep, and this can cause the farm vehicle to tip. Or the shoulders may not be able to support a heavy farm vehicle.

Yield to wide vehicles. Some farm equipment may be wider than the lane of travel. If you approach a piece of wide farm equipment traveling in the opposite direction and you cannot pass safely, stop. Then pull off the road or safely turn around or back up to a location that will allow the equipment to pass you.

Don't assume that the farmer knows you're there. Most operators of farm equipment will regularly check to see if there is traffic behind them. However, the farmer must spend most of the time looking ahead to keep the equipment safely on the road, and to watch for oncoming traffic. Also, most farm equipment is very loud, and the farmer will probably not be able to hear your vehicle. Therefore, do not assume that the farmer knows where your vehicle is located. Before you attempt to pass, use your car's horn to signal to the farmer that you are there.

Pass with caution. If a farmer has pulled off the road to allow you to pass, or if the farmer cannot pull off the road and you feel you must pass, do so with caution.

- Be watchful of vehicles behind you that may also try to pass.
- If you must enter the oncoming lane of traffic, do not pass unless you can see clearly ahead of both you and the vehicle you will pass.
- If there are any curves or hills ahead that may block your view or the view of oncoming vehicles, do not pass.
- Do not pass if you are in a designated "No Passing Zone" or within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevated structure or tunnel.
- Do not assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is going to turn right or is letting you pass. Due to the size of some farm implements, the farmer must execute wide left-hand turns. If you are unsure, check the operator's hand signals and check the left side of the road for gates, driveways or any place a farm vehicle might turn.