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Roadway Safety During Harvest

September 17 through the 23 is National Agriculture Safety and Health Week. If you are involved in the agriculture industry or follow ag related social media accounts you probably saw at least one post related to an agriculture safety topic. A variety of topics are highlighted during this week, everything from physical health to equipment safety. Although it's a week late, I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight roadway safety. As corn harvest wraps up in Southeast Kansas, soybean harvest is right around the corner and there will be a lot of farm equipment on the roads this fall.

Growing up my dad worked for the road maintenance department, and by the time I started driving the importance of slowing down in construction zones or when road maintenance crews were working on the side of the road was second nature. While there are signs in road construction zones bringing attention to the need to slow down, what do you do if you meet a tractor or combine on the road? If you didn't grow up in an area where farming is common the first time you meet a tractor or combine on the road can be a nerve-racking experience or if you get stuck behind one it can be a frustrating experience. Unlike construction zones, there aren't signs along the road giving instructions on what to do if you meet farm equipment. Below are a few tips and reminders of what to do if you meet farm equipment on the road.

- **Pay attention** – distracted driving increases the chances of collision if you meet a slow-moving vehicle, such as a tractor.
- **Slow down** – when you see farm equipment ahead, whether they are in front of you or in the oncoming lane, slow down. Farm equipment can't travel as fast as a vehicle can.
- **Be patient** – the farmer is going as fast as they safely can. Don't assume a farmer can move over to let you pass. The shoulders may be too narrow or steep, which can cause equipment to tip, or the shoulder may be too soft or wet to support the weight of heavy farm equipment. Most likely, they will move over to let you pass as soon as they safely can.
- **Don't assume the farmer knows you are behind them** – Big equipment equals big blind spots. Most operators will regularly check for vehicles behind them, but it is easy

for vehicles to get in their blind spots. They also have to focus on the road ahead to ensure they stay safely on the road and watch for oncoming traffic.

- **Don't assume they are letting you pass** – due to the size of some farm equipment, the operator has to make wide turns which means they will go farther into the opposite lane before making the turn. For example, if they are making a left turn they will go further onto the right side of the road before making the turn.
- **Move over** – If you see farm equipment in the oncoming lane, please move over as soon as possible. Some roads are narrow and larger equipment, like combines, will take up the entire road.
- **Stop at intersections** – not all intersections in rural areas have stop signs. Please stop at intersections, even if they don't have stop signs, to make sure there isn't traffic coming from a different direction.

If you meet farm equipment on the road please be patient, slow down, and share the road. The farmer in the tractor ahead of you wants to get safely to their destination just as much as you want to get to yours, and they are going as fast as they can. One of my favorite posts I saw during National Agriculture Safety and Health Week related to roadway safety was by Kylie Epperson, and was titled “He’s somebody’s someone”. Please remember that the person driving the tractor, combine, semi-truck, or other slow-moving equipment you meet on the road is somebody’s someone.

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