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Harvest Safety

Harvest has begun and will soon be in full swing. It's an awesome time of year, and potentially dangerous time as well. Fortunately, a few preventative steps might help.

I read an article last fall from an Extension Educator in Nebraska with experience as a firefighter and EMT. One of the discussions by his department during harvest was the increase in fire calls resulting from residue buildup around engine/exhaust systems and concealed drive belts/pulleys. It's a good reminder to make sure dust/debris is regularly removed from machines and to check electrical systems to reduce sparks that can ignite debris, fuel, etc....

When harvesting, start on the downwind side of the field. In case of fire, flames will be pushed towards the harvested portion of the field, reducing potential damage. Carry a cell phone and know your service levels so emergency contacts can be made. Knowing field location is extremely important for the entirety of the harvest crew. Field locations should be able to be relayed to emergency personnel using local road numbers and letters.

Have fire extinguishers in the combine cab, one accessible from the ground, and another in equipment or a service truck nearby. In case of fire, don't hesitate to use it after calling 911.

Road safety is important, as well. Think about how many vehicles you encounter moving from field to field? Do you have working flashers, lights, and adequate slow-moving vehicle signs? It may seem logical for those of us in an agricultural community to slow down when we see farm equipment. Still, that slow-moving vehicle may only be another obstacle to pass on the highway for someone who doesn't understand.

Having a plan cannot be stressed enough. Lots of moving parts make up a harvest operation. Combine. Tractor and grain cart. Semi. Auger. Grain Bin or Elevator. All have their own moving parts and hazards. Have a plan to make sure all are operated safely, and that plans are in place should an accident occur. We don't like to think about it, but we need to.

Take care of yourself. Avoid replacing sleep with an energy drink or a meal with a candy bar. Take regular breaks to stop, stretch, and move around. Taking care of yourself physically can also help you stay more alert and prevent you from making unsafe or time-wasting mistakes.

Harvest *should* be an enjoyable time of the year. Take measures now to make *sure* it is.

Overseeding Cool-Season Grass Lawns

If your tall fescue lawn ended the season thinner than desired, consider a September overseeding using this 'simple' recipe.

Start by mowing to a one-and-a-half-inch height – removing clippings. Check the thatch layer to make sure it is less than three-quarters of an inch

In small areas, use a rake to roughen soil before seeding. In larger areas, use a verticut machine run in both directions to cut furrows in the soil. A core aerator (three to four passes for adequate holes) can be used instead, with each core providing an excellent environment for seed germination/growth while increasing water infiltration and decreasing compaction.

If the area is large, use six to eight pounds of seed per thousand square feet. For thickening, use a half rate. While you're seeding, apply fertilizer according to soil test or use a starter fertilizer at a rate as suggested on the bag. Water in and maintain moisture through fall.