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**Harvest Safety**

If harvest has not already begun for you, it likely soon will be. It’s an awesome and yet potentially dangerous time of year. Consider a few preventative steps to help reduce that danger.

An Extension Educator in Nebraska with experience as a firefighter and EMT wrote an article a few years ago sharing insight from the firefighters in his department about the increase in fire calls during harvest. He noted how often residue buildup around engine/exhaust systems and concealed drive belts/pulleys was the culprit. It’s a good reminder to make sure dust/debris is regularly removed from machines and to check electrical systems to reduce sparking potential.

In addition to regular cleaning, consider starting harvest on the downwind side of the field when possible. In case of fire, flames will be pushed towards the harvested portion of the field, reducing potential damage. Carry a cell phone and be aware of service levels so emergency calls can be made. Everyone on the harvest crew should know the field location and be able to accurately relay that information 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. You’ll encounter lots of vehicles moving from field to field. Do you have working flashers, lights, and adequate slow moving vehicle signs? It may seem logical for those involved with agriculture to slow down when we see farm equipment, but a slow moving vehicle may be just another obstacle to pass on the highway for someone else.

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.

**Lawn Overseeding**

If your tall fescue lawn got a little thin this summer, now is a good time to do something about it. Our optimal overseeding window starts in September.

Start by mowing the grass short (1 to 1.5 inches) and removing the clippings. This will make it easier to achieve good seed-soil contact and increase the amount of light that will reach the young seedlings. A power raking might be in order for thatch layers between a quarter and three quarters of an inch. Deeper depths may require greater attention.

With thatch under control, soil can be prepared for seeding. For small areas, use a hand rake to roughen up soil before seeding. Larger areas may benefit from machine tillage/seeding. Verticut and slit seeder machines cut furrows in the soil (seed in two directions for best results). Core removal via aeration provides an excellent environment for seed germination and growth (make three to four passes to ensure enough holes for the seed).

As you seed, apply fertilizer as suggested by a soil test or starter fertilizer at the rate suggested on the bag.