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### **Safety During Harvest**

Travel almost anywhere in Northeast Kansas this time of year and you'll likely note the approach of harvest. It signifies not only the conclusion of a growing season, but also the start of a very busy time for producers. If we're not careful, it can become a dangerous time as well.

Injury prevention features on modern equipment are better than ever, but not failproof. Whether you're the operator or a casual observer, give a wide berth to moving equipment, particularly augers and power take off shafts. The snapping rolls on a combine pull in stalks at a rate of 12 feet per second –faster than you can react to pull away if you get too close. Stay away from moving/rotating equipment until the machine is shut off and can be safely approached.

Equipment operators should also be aware of fire hazards caused by residue buildup around engine/exhaust systems and concealed drive belts/pulleys. Regular equipment cleaning, including a check of electrical systems, is vital to help prevent potential issues. For an added measure of safety, start harvesting on the downwind side of the field when possible. If a fire occurs, flames will move towards the harvested portion of the field, reducing potential damage.

Safety equipment should include a cell phone, first aid kit, and fire extinguisher. Make sure fire extinguishers are properly charged and cell phones can be recharged through the day. Make note of poor cell phone coverage areas, when possible, sharing your harvesting plans including physical locations with your harvest crew and other family members. A little time updating can save a lot of precious response time later.

A vehicle traveling 65 miles per hour approaching a combine traveling at 15 miles per hour will cover and catch that combine in less than 20 seconds. Operators should be aware of fast approaching vehicles, making sure equipment hazard lighting is clean and in working order. Look ahead for 'emergency exits', giving yourself a place to go when an approaching vehicle doesn't allow for the same. Following equipment or semis on highways or county roads? Give equipment and yourself plenty of room. Pass only when safe to do so and be aware of vehicles entering and exiting the roadway to prevent approaching too quickly.

Be sure to take care of yourself as well. Take regular breaks to stop, stretch, and move around. Need 'time away' to refocus or get a break from harvest stresses? Carve out time to slow down and refresh. The marathon of harvest can feel like a sprint, but it will only be made worse if you or others around you are injured because of physical or mental fatigue.

Harvest is an awesome time. Plan now to make sure it starts *and* finishes that way.