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## Harvest Safety Tips

Consider this: a vehicle traveling 65 miles per hour approaching a combine traveling 15 miles per hour will cover and *catch* that combine in *less than* 20 seconds. It happens fast and with harvest upon us, it's a good reminder for all of us to be alert. Fall and harvest season is a great time and it's most enjoyable when we all can do so safely.

The aforementioned slow moving vehicle example is a good reminder for farm equipment operators *and* people sharing roadways to both be on the lookout for each other. Equipment operators should be aware of vehicles that will likely be moving faster than they are and provide warning by way of equipment hazard lighting that is clean and in good working order. Look ahead for 'emergency exits' that can provide a place to go when an approaching vehicle doesn't keep a safe distance. If you're following slower moving equipment or semis, give yourself plenty of room. Pass only when safe to do so and be aware that vehicles will likely be entering and exiting the roadway at places you may not expect.

When in the field in the operator's seat or on the ground nearby, give equipment a wide berth, paying particular attention to augers and power take off shafts. Combine snapping rolls can pull stalks in at a rate of 12 feet per second – much faster than you can react to pull away. Avoid moving/rotating equipment until the machine is shut down and can be safely approached.

Keep a cell phone, first aid kit, and properly charged fire extinguisher nearby. Keep cell phones charged and because coverage can vary, share harvest plans - including a physical location - with the harvest crew and other family members. It can cut response time later if someone needs to get to you – but you are unable to communicate.

Pay attention to fire hazards. Recent moisture may have provided a little 'buffer', but when moisture levels decline, temperatures increase, and wind picks up, things dry out in a hurry. Be aware of residue buildup around engine/exhaust systems and concealed drive belts/pulleys that can cause friction resulting in fires. Clean equipment regularly and check electrical systems to help prevent potential issues. If possible, consider starting harvest on the downwind side of fields. If a fire does occur, flames will hopefully move towards harvested areas of the field, reducing potential damage. Firefighting tools and water onsite are a good idea and be aware during extreme conditions of the increased pressure on local fire departments trying to assist when fires do occur.

Carve out time to slow down and refresh. Change things up by switching harvest jobs or shutting down to catch a school event. Seemingly small changes of pace can provide good opportunities to slow down and refocus. The marathon of harvest can feel like a sprint, but it will be worse if someone is injured because of physical or mental fatigue.

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