



FACT SHEET

Module 4.4 Sharing the Road with Farm Equipment



Massive farm equipment, moving from field to field for harvesting often take up more than a single lane of rural roadways even if the operator is driving as close to the far edge of the shoulder as possible. Courtesy and patience are important as drivers share the road with agricultural implements. Farm equipment operators will generally pull off to the side of the road at frequent intervals to let traffic behind them pass. However, as many rural areas are frequently becoming home to many new residents, traffic on country roadways in agricultural areas has been steadily increasing. When a farmer meets a steady stream of oncoming vehicles, the farmer may feel that it is more prudent to continue on rather than risk partially pulling off to the side of the road and having motorists pass when oncoming traffic may be approaching at high rates of speed. This is especially true when visibility is poor on curves and hills.

Consider the following safe behaviors to protect yourself and others while traveling on rural roadways, especially during harvest season.

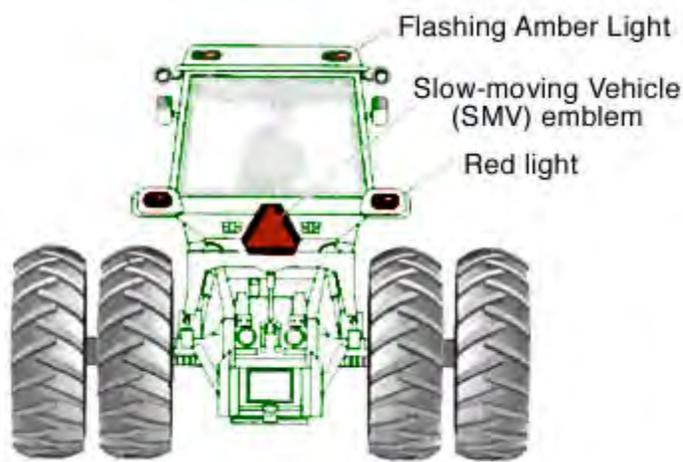
Slow down. Excessive speed on rural roadways is dangerous. With hills, woods, streams, grades, curves and bridges on rural roadways, all of which can greatly reduce your ability to know what lies ahead on the road, it is important to keep in mind that farm equipment generally has top speeds of 15-20 mph. Excessive speed by drivers impairs the equipment operator's ability to stop quickly and reduces the reaction time if they meet you in a blind curve.



Don't assume that the equipment operator knows that you are behind them. Unlike the stable outside mirrors that are standard on cars and pickups, mirrors on farm equipment tend to take a lot of abuse from tree branches and are prone to vibrating. Visibility behind harvesters and tractors pulling equipment is very limited at best.

Be cautious when passing farm equipment. Look for potential field entrances when you are preparing to pass. If the equipment ahead of you is slowing, especially if there is an opening to a field, there is a good chance that the operator may be getting ready to turn. This is a good time to wait rather than pass, even if the operator is preparing to turn right. Often farm equipment will need to make wide turns in order to be able to gain access to the field. Some newer equipment may have turn signals, but much of the older equipment will not. Often, tractors pulling large wagons will have turn signals and flashers running, but they will not be visible to motorists directly behind the wagon because of its height.

Watch for lights and slow moving vehicle (SMV) triangles at night. If you see a pattern of lights ahead of you that you do not immediately recognize as a car or truck, slow down. Farm equipment may have many different configurations of lights or reflective markings. Also, SMVs should have a red and orange reflective triangle sign at the rear. Meet or pass these vehicles with caution.



Appreciation for this graphic published in the Bulletin "Boosting Visibility of Ag Equipment" AEX-598-99 authored by Tom Bean - Leader, Safety Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering at The Ohio State University.

Montana Laws

MCA 61-9-215. Lamps on farm tractors, farm equipment, and implements of husbandry.

(1) A farm tractor and a self-propelled farm equipment unit or implement of husbandry not equipped with an electric lighting system must at all times mentioned in [61-9-201](#) be equipped with at least one lamp displaying a white light visible from a distance of not less than 500 feet to the front of the vehicle, at least one lamp displaying a red light visible from a distance of not less than 500 feet to the rear of the vehicle, and two red reflectors visible from a distance of 100 to 600 feet to the rear when illuminated by the upper beams of headlamps. The lights required in this section must be positioned so that one lamp showing to the front and one lamp or reflector showing to the rear indicates the farthest projection of the tractor, unit, or implement on the side of the road used in passing the vehicle.

(3) A farm tractor and a self-propelled unit of farm equipment or implement of husbandry equipped with an electric lighting system must at all times mentioned in [61-9-201](#) be equipped with two multiple-beam or single-beam headlamps meeting the requirements of [61-9-220](#) or [61-9-222](#) and two red lamps visible from a distance of not less than 500 feet to the rear, or one red lamp visible from a distance of not less than 500 feet to the rear and two red reflectors visible from a distance of 100 to 600 feet to the rear when illuminated by the upper beams of headlamps. The red lamps or reflectors must be mounted in the rear of the farm tractor or self-propelled implement of husbandry to indicate the extreme left and right projections of the vehicle on the highway.