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Driver Safety Tips for Sharing the Road with Farmers During Planting Season

STATEWIDE, ARK. – Planting season has returned to Arkansas and with that comes the likelihood of increased encounters with slow-moving farm equipment on roadways. Farmers often need to move equipment from one field to another which can present unique challenges when slow moving equipment tries to mix with fast-moving vehicles. The AAD urges motorists to be aware of farm equipment and take safety precautions when necessary to share the road.

“With agriculture as our state’s largest industry we hope that drivers will be patient with our farmers and ranchers as they work to get our spring planting season underway. If we all take a few added precautions, we can ensure the safety of everyone,” says Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward.

In an effort to help drivers avoid accidents with slow-moving farm equipment this spring, the AAD offers the following tips:

- **Slow down when going through agricultural areas.** Drivers should stay within the posted speed limits, especially when traveling through agricultural areas. When drivers see equipment up ahead, don’t wait to slow down when you get to the slow moving equipment, begin slowing down several hundred yards back. This also helps signal to other driver to begin slowing down.
- **Stay back at least 100 yards when following farm equipment.** The triangular slow-moving vehicle emblem displayed on the back of farm equipment signifies that the machinery will not be traveling at high speeds and maneuverability is limited. Remember to keep your distance, to allow space for any quick stops, flying debris, or other unexpected event.
- **Look for yellow farmer road signs.** Many roads next to farms post yellow signs with a silhouetted farmer on a tractor to warn drivers that they are entering an area where slow-moving vehicles are likely to be on the road. This should signal the driver to be on the lookout for farm equipment.
- **Don’t assume the farmer can see your vehicle.** While most farmers check frequently for vehicles approaching from behind them, their focus must remain on the road ahead. Drive far enough behind farm equipment to ensure farmers can see the vehicle in their mirrors.
- **Use extreme caution when passing.** If you cannot clearly see what lies ahead of both your vehicle and the equipment you are passing, do not pass. Never pass farm equipment when approaching a

hill or curve, and do not attempt to pass when within 100 yards of an intersection, bridge, railroad crossing or tunnel.

- **Remember, farmers are as eager to exit the road as you are to get around them.** When farmers have to access roadways with equipment, they are driving slower and more cautiously than anywhere else. When driving behind farming equipment, drivers should be aware that the operator must find an appropriate time to let vehicles pass. The farmer must survey the shoulder of the road for an area that is not soft, wet or steep and can support the weight of the equipment without causing it to tip.

Tips for farmers:

- **Keep flashing lights on.** Use flashing lights on equipment to draw attention to your slow speed.
- **Make sure the slow-moving vehicle sign is visible.** This emblem is used to alert others of the equipment's speed and maneuverability capabilities, but doesn't help if it is not visible. Mount it as high and as far left as possible. Keep the sign clean and replace it if it is no longer reflective.
- **Stay to the right.** Keep farm equipment as far to the right edge of the road as safely possible, but stay on the road.
- **Make intentions to turn obvious.** Collisions between farm equipment and other vehicles on the road commonly occur when a slow-moving vehicle is attempting to turn. Use turn signals or the appropriate hand signal to indicate turns. If the operator is using flashing lights, switch those off when approaching a turn so that the trailing vehicles will clearly identify a blinker signal.
- **Avoid encouraging a motorist to pass.** While it might seem courteous to wave someone ahead of a slow-moving piece of equipment, the driver of the trailing vehicle must ultimately determine when he or she can safely pass.
- **When it is a safe location for you, your equipment, and other vehicles can see around you, pull over to allow traffic to pass.**

The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

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