

Ten Reasons to Use Marking and Lighting on Tractors and Machinery on Public Roads

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Agricultural equipment on the road during fall harvest can be hazardous to both farmers and motorists. Most farm equipment travels 25 miles per hour (mph) or less in areas where the speed limit may be posted at 55 mph. A motorist traveling 55 mph following farm equipment traveling 15 mph travels about 400 feet and has less than 7 seconds of closure time to reach the farm equipment. Below are ten reasons to use marking and lighting on your farm equipment.

Number 10 – 15,000 farm vehicles are involved in collisions on US roads every year according to the National Safety Council.

Number 9 - 90 % of these collisions occur on dry roads during the daytime according to the National Safety Council.

Number 8 – 2/3 of these are rear-end collisions according to the National Safety Council.

Number 7 – Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) emblems can warn motorists up to 1200 feet or more away. The reflective material on the SMV emblems conforms to American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) Standards regarding the Slow Moving Vehicle Emblem. **Effective January 1, 2009 New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law** states – “Farm machinery . . . designed to operate at 25 mph or less whether self propelled or used in combination, shall each separately display a slow-moving vehicle emblem.” The intent of the new law is to improve visibility of farm equipment when operating on public highways. The law prior to 1/1/09 requires an SMV emblem on either the tractor or the vehicle being towed, but not both. Sometimes, the towed vehicle can block the SMV emblem on back of the tractor.

Number 6 – Reflective marking material can warn motorists over a mile away. This includes the triangular border of the SMV emblem and the retroreflective tape used to mark the front, side and back of your equipment. Yellow tape is used for the side and front corners, red tape is used for the rear corners, and orange tape is used to mark inside of the rear corners.

Number 5 – SMV emblems and Extremity Marking kits cost are low cost. Typically these cost \$8-10 and can be purchased through NYCAMH, your equipment dealer or through your farm supply carrier.

Number 4 – Lights on self-propelled equipment make you more visible to oncoming traffic and traffic following you. **Effective January 1, 2009 New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law** states – “It shall be unlawful to operate, drive, or park self-propelled agricultural equipment on any public highway or street in this state, during the period from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise and during other times as visibility for a distance of one thousand feet ahead of or behind such agricultural equipment is not clear, unless such agricultural equipment is equipped with

lamps of a type approved by the commissioner which are lighted and in good working condition.” This requirement had already been a Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) regulation. The law effective 1/1/09 simply codifies it in statute.

Number 3 – Flashers and turn signals on your tractors and towed equipment will indicate your location and intentions. This will decrease left turn and sideswipe collisions.

Number 2 – Being in compliance with marking and lighting regulations may reduce your liability in the event of a collision on public roads.

The **Number 1 Reason** to use Marking and Lighting on your tractors and machinery on public roads is to **Prevent you, your family members or workers from becoming the victim. According to the National Safety Council usually when the fatality occurs, the victim is the tractor operator.**

Note - In addition to the above requirements, this new New York State legislation also requires that the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee develop a public outreach campaign to inform the general public of the proper use of the slow moving vehicle emblem and of roadway safety pertaining to agricultural equipment.

If you would like further information on NYCAMH’s on-farm safety services, please call 800-343-7527, ext 236 or e-mail me at sscofield@nycamh.com. NYCAMH, a program of Bassett Healthcare Network, is enhancing agricultural and rural health by preventing and treating occupational injury and illness.