



Tractor Safety

Tractor operators who know their equipment and are aware of possible hazards are the best equipped to avoid tractor incidents. Know each control, its location and how it works. Know how to stop the tractor and all the attachments quickly in the event of an emergency.

General Safety

- ✔ Make sure that you are properly trained for and experienced in planned operations and equipment uses.
- ✔ Always keep both hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road.
- ✔ Follow recommendations from management and equipment manufacturers regarding regular maintenance routines, including checks on oil and fluid levels, tire pressure, fan belts, safety decals and devices. Ensure the tractor's engine is off and cool before fueling and prohibit smoking in refueling areas.
- ✔ Only operate tractors at speeds safe for the conditions, and slow down when turning, driving on a slope or crossing slippery, muddy or rough terrain.
- ✔ Whenever possible, avoid driving on steep slopes or near ditches, embankments or holes. Never back down a steep slope, and make sure that the tractor is properly counterbalanced.
- ✔ Make sure that any attached implements allow for adequate ground clearance.
- ✔ When operating in wet weather, slow down and stay alert for dangers hidden under pooling water. If thunder or lightning occurs, immediately stop the tractor and get indoors if possible. In icy conditions, use tire chains and wheel weights and proceed with extreme caution.

The Risk of Rollovers

As a tractor operator, you need to remain conscious of your tractor's center of gravity (usually located in front of the operator's seat, just above the height of the rear axle). Speed, turning rate, raising or towing loads or crossing steep or uneven terrain can all affect the tractor's center of gravity and increase the risk of rollovers.

Rollover Protection Structure

A rollover protection structure (ROPS) typically consists of a two- or four-post roll bar or cage frame surrounding the operator's seat. The goal of an ROPS system is to stop a tractor from completely rolling over, allowing it to come to rest on its side and giving the operator room to escape. While all tractors built after October 25, 1976, are required to have an ROPS installed, many tractors currently in use are not equipped with one. Regardless, an ROPS is advisable in nearly every situation, and after-market and specialized systems can be installed on any tractor.

- ✔ **ROPS systems do not excuse tractor operators from using seat belts.**
- ✔ **Never use a tractor not equipped with an ROPS in situations where one is required.**



Situational Hazards

Working around Power Take-Offs

The high speeds at which power take-offs (PTOs) rotate make them extremely dangerous and prone to catching loose clothing or hair.

- ✔ **Always** refer to the equipment's manual for detailed operating and safety instructions regarding the equipment's PTO.
- ✔ **Always** keep safety devices, such as shields and guards, in place, and avoid using equipment with damaged or missing safety devices until they've been repaired or replaced.
- ✔ Turn off the tractor's engine and disengage the PTO before attempting to remove equipment or dismount from the tractor.
- ✔ **Never** step over a rotating PTO or shaft.

Hitching Loads

Hitching loads at any point other than a hitch point or drawbar can increase the risk of rollover.

- ✔ Only hitch loads to designated hitch points or the tractor's drawbar—**never hitch loads to the axle or seat bracket.**
- ✔ Make sure that no loose chains or other components that might catch on objects are dangling from either the hitch point or implement.

Traveling on Public Roads

- ✔ Know how long it takes the tractor to accelerate and slow to a stop, especially when towing equipment. Always leave plenty of space for stopping quickly if necessary.
- ✔ Wear all restraints and seat belts provided, follow all traffic laws, use safe driving practices and do not allow riders.
- ✔ Avoid driving on roads during periods of high traffic, when there is low visibility or severe weather, or at night. If driving at night, ensure you comply with federal, state and local laws concerning lights and reflectors.
- ✔ In most states, a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem must be securely attached on the rear of any tractor and its towed attachment traveling 25 mph or slower. The SMV emblem, a fluorescent yellow-orange triangle with a dark red reflective border, must be centered between 2 and 10 feet high with the triangle point facing upwards.
- ✔ Keep the PTO in neutral.
- ✔ Never engage the differential lock while driving. It can be hard on the rear tires and, at highway speeds, can contribute to problems in a turn.
- ✔ Lock the brake pedals together for more even braking ability.
- ✔ Avoid driving on the shoulder of the road. Never drive with wheels partially on the shoulder and partially on the roadway. If the right tire of the tractor goes off the road during travel, attempt a slow recovery. Avoid turning sharply back onto the roadway or a rollover could result.
- ✔ Stay alert and be aware of traffic. The slow speed of tractors compared to traffic is a main cause of accidents. If you are impeding traffic, pull over and let traffic pass you when it is safe to do so.
- ✔ Ensure that the tractor or attachments do not extend over the center line. If they do, use an escort vehicle.
- ✔ Always communicate your plans to stop, slow down or turn with other drivers. Use hand signals if necessary.
- ✔ Drive more slowly if pulling a heavy load, when going downhill or when turning. Higher speeds cause tractors to be more unstable and steering to be more unpredictable.



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