



## News Release

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### **Drivers urged to stay alert, give farm equipment operators extra room during harvest**

ST. PAUL, Minn.—The Minnesota Transportation and Public Safety departments urge motorists to use extra caution on state highways now that farmers are shipping their crops to markets, grain elevators and processing plants.

“Truck traffic increases significantly during the harvest season, both in terms of volume and the number of hours each day trucks and other farm-related vehicles are on the road,” said Sue Groth, Mn/DOT state traffic engineer and director of the Office of Traffic, Safety and Technology. “There have been numerous farm vehicle crashes over the past few years due to the increased traffic.”

From 2006-2008, there were 434 crashes that involved a farm vehicle, resulting in nine fatalities and 26 serious injuries, according to the Department of Public Safety. In 2008 alone, farm-related vehicles were involved in 127 crashes. Of those crashes, two resulted in fatalities, 43 in injuries and 82 in property damage.

State officials urge motorists to watch for tractors pulling wagons at slow speeds, as well as combines and other wide equipment that may go over the center line. The leading contributing crash factors in farm vehicle crashes are inattention, speeding and unsafe passing.

“Motorists need to be prepared for slow-moving farm vehicles, especially on rural, two-lane roads,” said Cheri Marti, DPS Office of Traffic Safety director. “Farm vehicles are generally very large, so motorists need to give them extra space and use caution when attempting to pass.”

Motorists should also watch for fallen debris from farm-related vehicles and remember that it is safer to brake or drive through the debris rather than veer into oncoming traffic or off the road.

Drivers are urged to:

- Watch for debris dropped by trucks hauling sugar beets and other crops.
- Use safety belts.
- Drive with headlights on at all times.
- Observe posted speed limits and traffic signs.

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