



Farm Tractor Road Safety Training Program



Goal

This program aims to educate tractor operators on safe practices for operating tractors on public roads.

Objective

The objective of this program is to train tractor drivers on the vehicle requirements, general traffic rules, and operator responsibilities when using tractors on public roads.

Background

Defensive driving is critical to the safety of operators who move farm equipment on public roads. Accidents often occur due to factors such as:

- Lack of experience handling heavy, slow-moving machinery.
- Driving too fast, especially when pulling a heavy load or turning.

- Driving partially over the center line.
- Driving partially on the shoulder and partially on the road surface.
- Colliding with a fixed object, such as a tree or road barrier.
- Motorists approaching the slower-moving tractor too quickly to react properly.

Various regulations and laws as outlined below have been implemented to prevent such accidents.

Signage

The following applies to all farm equipment operating at or below 25 miles per hour (mph):

- Display a slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem on the rear of the tractor or equipment so it can be seen by vehicles approaching from the rear.

- Attach an additional SMV emblem to any towed equipment that obstructs the tractor emblem.

Lighting

Farm tractors are required to have the following lighting:

- Tractors must have two forward-facing headlights and a red taillight that burns continuously. The taillight must be visible for 500 feet under normal conditions and mounted on the far left side of the tractor.
- Towed equipment requires two rear-mounted red reflectors positioned at the extreme left and right.
- Hazard-warning lights (flashers) are mandatory for farm tractors and equipment when operating on public roads. White or amber flashers are mounted on the front, and red or amber on the rear. These lights must be activated when the vehicle is in operation.

Wheels and tires

Cleats, lugs, flanges, studs, spikes, or any other extensions of the wheel rim that could damage the road surface are unlawful on public roads. However, tire chains are allowed.

General traffic rules

All Texas traffic laws apply to tractor operators using public roads even though a driver's license is not required. Each operator must know Texas traffic laws as well as safe operating procedures for the equipment they use. Tractor operators must:

- Adhere to all traffic lights and signs.
- Use turn signals or hand signals when changing lanes, making a turn, pulling onto a road, or slowing down to stop.

- Signal at least 100 ft. before turning or stopping.
- Ensure signals are easily visible.
- Equip tractors with turn signals when driving after dark.

Intersections

Yield the right of way at intersections according to specific rules:

- When driving on a single- or two-lane road intersecting with a multi-lane road, yield to vehicles on the multi-lane road.
- When driving on an unpaved road intersecting a paved road, yield to vehicles on the paved road.
- When turning left, oncoming traffic has the right of way.
- When leaving a private road, yield to vehicles on the public road.
- When traveling a road that ends at a through street, traffic on the intersecting street must yield to vehicles on the through street.

Turning

Farm tractors and equipment must follow these safe operating procedures:

- Avoid making last-minute turns to keep the tractor from rolling over.
- Give the proper turn signal at least 100 feet before you make a turn.
- Look behind and to both sides to determine where other vehicles are before making a turn.
- Move into position for the turn at least one-half block before the turn or continue until the next turn can be made safely.

- Apply the brakes while slowing down for the turn, not during the turn.
- Make and complete the turn in the correct lane.

Parking

Use these tips to ensure tractors are parked safely:

- Use warning flashers and other lights to signal your intentions.
- Do not park closer than 50 feet from a railroad crossing.
- Leave plenty of room for others to pass when parking on the side of the road.
- Make sure farm implements are parked completely off the road.

Operator responsibilities

Operators must ensure that:

- Equipment is well-maintained per the manufacturer's specifications.
- Equipment is equipped with an operational 2A-10 B: C-rated dry chemical fire extinguisher and a properly stocked first-aid kit.

- Equipment lighting works and conforms to state laws.
- Brakes are operational and in good condition.
- Tires are in good condition and properly inflation.
- Hitches are sturdy and safety chains are available for use with towed equipment.
- Wagons are equipped with brakes.
- Shields or guards are properly in place.
- Seat belts are installed on all tractors with rollover protection.
- Clean, visible SMV emblems are mounted on all equipment used on public roads and they are replaced when damaged or faded.
- Farm tractors and equipment are never driven on public roads when the operator is impaired by drugs, alcohol, prescription drugs, or fatigue.

By following these guidelines and regulations, tractor operators can reduce injuries and deaths while driving on public roads.

Review questions

1. **What emblem is required by state law on the rear of farm tractors or equipment operated on a public road?** _____
2. **By state law, what hazard warning lights are required on tractors operated on public roads?** _____
3. **At what distance should you signal before turning?** _____
4. **How far from a railroad track should you park a piece of farm equipment?** _____
5. **Who has the right-of-way when traveling from a dirt road to a paved road?** _____

Answers to review questions: 1. A slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblem; 2. Amber or white lights on the front and amber or red lights on the rear; 3. 100 feet; 4. 50 feet; 5. Traffic on the paved road.



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