

With wheat harvest just beginning, I would like to talk a bit about safety during harvest for both those harvesting and those that live and travel in the area. I'll start with those that are harvesting. Check your equipment to ensure that everything is in good working order including your lights, safety shields and that everything has an appropriate SMV sign. Remember to shut down the machine and remove the keys when making any repairs on the machine. When traveling on the roads, make sure that you have your flashers on and pay extra attention to others sharing the road for you and always obey the rules of the roads whether it be regular traffic signs or legal weight limits. Although sometimes farmers might have a time crunch with impending weather approaching, please don't operate machinery when excessively fatigued. For those on foot around equipment during harvest, remember that you might not always be easily seen from the operator's station and to always make sure you can see the operator's eyes and they know you are there before moving in around by moving equipment.

For those that live and/or travel in areas with harvesting operations, practice extra awareness and patience when on the roads. Farm machinery is not designed to travel at the same speeds as regular automobiles travel. Farm machinery is often wider than the traffic lane and sometimes can be as wide as a rural road. Below are some tips from the Kansas Highway Patrol when traveling on the roads during harvest season.

- **Don't assume the farmer knows you're there.** Most operators of farm equipment regularly check for vehicles behind them, however, most of their time must be spent looking ahead to stay on the road and watch for oncoming traffic. Implements are very loud, hindering the farmer's ability to hear your vehicle.
- **Pass with extreme caution.** Don't pass unless you can see clearly ahead of both your vehicle and the farm equipment you are passing. If there are curves or hills blocking your view of oncoming traffic, wait until you can clearly visualize the area you're passing in. You should not pass in a designated "No Passing Zone," even if you are stuck behind a farm vehicle. Do not pass if you are within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevated structure, or tunnel.
- **When a farm vehicle pulls to the right side of the road, it does not mean it is turning right or allowing you to pass.** Due to the size of some farm equipment, the farmer must execute wide left turns, so allow it plenty of room and time to turn, and be alert to see if there might be a driveway or field they may be turning into.
- **Be patient.** Don't assume that a farmer can move aside to let you pass. Shoulders may be soft, wet, or steep, which can cause the farm vehicle to tip, or the shoulder may not support the weight of a heavy farm vehicle. The farmer understands you are being delayed and will move over at the first safe location available.
- **Think of the slow moving vehicle emblem as a warning to adjust your speed.** When you see the slow moving vehicle emblem, you should immediately slow down. While the emblems are visible from a long distance away, it is often difficult to judge the speed at which you are closing in on a vehicle, especially at night.
- **Pay attention.** When you are not focused solely on the road, you increase your chances of a collision, especially if you should come upon a slow moving farm vehicle.

A little patience, courtesy and extra awareness can make this a safe and smooth harvest season for everyone in Rawlins County.