

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Corn Harvest Safety

It will soon be time to get the corn pickers out after they have gone through an off-season makeover. It is an established fact that general agriculture is the second most dangerous occupation, just behind mining.

Harvest season for all grain crops can be particularly dangerous because of the equipment that is used and the human factors involved. The human factors include fatigue due to long days during the harvest season, the environmental factors such as mud, dust, rain, heat, cold and other risks.

Here are some suggestions to follow with the approaching season that, if we read and follow, can make the season more enjoyable and less stressful:

## **GENERAL SAFETY-**

- ✓ Allow ample time to complete a field or project. Don't rush or take short cuts. Either of these can increase your risk of injury.
- ✓ Stay alert, which involves sufficient rest at night, avoiding medications and other substances that will hinder your efficiency while operating equipment.
- ✓ Before leaving the combine, shut off the engine and remove the key.
- ✓ Read and get familiar with the manufacturer's instruction manual, paying ample attention to the safety statements.
- ✓ The operator should take care in looking around the area to make sure that there are no interferences from obstacles, people and animals.
- ✓ The "One seat-One rider" rule is always in effect on combines, unless the machine is equipped with a buddy set for training purposes.

## **SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE-**

- Repair and service all equipment in the off-season, so when the harvest is ready the equipment is too.
- Before servicing the machine, lower the head to the ground, put it in park or neutral, set the brake, turn off the engine and remove the key.
- Never clear a clogged harvester with the engine running.
- Allow the harvester knives to stop rotating before opening the access doors to work on them. Lockout devices should be used, which will prevent accidental start up and will help to reduce the potential for serious injury.

- Follow all specifications when sharpening knives or replacing them, forage blades, or combine cylinder bars. Be sure to torque the knife, blade, or bar attachment bolts to the manufacturer's specifications.
- Don't place yourself behind or beneath the header without knowing that they can't come down. Use the manufacturer's hydraulic stops, solid blocks, or other failsafe devices.

## **FIRE AND FALL PREVENTION-**

### **Reduce fire hazards by:**

- ❖ Keeping all belts tight.
- ❖ Keep dust, debris and chaff buildups clear.
- ❖ Check bearings regularly.
- ❖ Each harvester should be equipped with at least one type of ABC fire extinguisher, 10 lb. minimum or a type A, which will suffice for brush, chaff or debris. The ABC will cover most any type of fire that you would encounter. We recommend mounting these extinguishers on the outside of the cab. However, many of our extinguishers are mounted on the inside of the cab. Now, if you really want to be compliant and safer, have a 2.5 or 5 gallon water pump mounted along the conventional fire extinguishers.
- ❖ Keep the ladders clear of mud and debris. Operators should wear good shoes or boots with slip resistant soles to enhance their safety when climbing or descending equipment ladders.

## **ROAD SAFETY-**

- Make the machine as narrow as possible by folding in the augers, adjusting the hitches and removing the headers.
- Make sure the machine is equipped with clear, reflective Slow Moving Vehicle signage (SMV).
- Use warning lights when possible and signal at all turns.
- Don't drive on the shoulder where the ground is probably uneven and rough. It can cause the machine to tip over. Drive on the pavement as much as possible, and when you come to a wide place on the highway like a driveway, pull off the pavement and allow the traffic to pass.
- When descending hills, do so with the machine in mid-range or low gear. Do not descend with the machine in high gear or in neutral.
- A safe and reasonable suggestion is to have an escort on the highway when changing fields.

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