

# MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND  
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

*Safety Tips:*  
*Slow Moving Vehicle Signs*

Moving agriculture equipment across public highways can be very dangerous. Statistics show that about 20% of all traffic accidents involving agriculture equipment results from rear-end collisions. The problem happens when a vehicle comes up on the rear end of a tractor, combine or another type of farm implement, moving too fast and can't stop.

The best protection that a tractor or implement has is the **slow-moving-vehicle sign (SMV)** to avoid this type of accident. Even then, there is still a great risk as we have seen here in North Mississippi, where a right-of-way mower was within 2 feet of the edge of the asphalt with a **SMV** and flashing lights- an 18-wheeler came up too fast and too close to the tractor- the tractor driver was killed. This accident probably would have happened anyway, **SMV** or not, as the truck was driving too fast and had no control to slow down or swerve to miss it.

If the tractor and/or implements have the **SMV** attached, it does give approaching vehicles time to slow down before they get too close. If the implement doesn't have the highly visible **SMV** attached to the unit the motorist has very little time to adjust their speed.

Most all states that I have checked require that all tractors or other farm implements traveling over public roads at speed of 25 mph or less must have the **Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV)** attached to the back of the implement. The law states that this includes tractors, tractors with mowers attached, combines, highboy spray rigs, construction equipment and even horse drawn carriages.

### From the Farm Safety Association-

Prior to December, 1996, only farm tractors and self-propelled machinery had to have the **SMV** emblem. As of December 1, 1996, all vehicles that cannot keep up a speed of 40km/h (for example, horse-drawn carriages and road construction equipment) must display the **SMV** emblem. If a slow moving vehicle is pulling another behind it then the **SMV** sign must hang on the rearmost vehicle of any combination of vehicles.

Horse-drawn carriages driven by people whose religious beliefs do not permit the use of the sign are exempt. However, the back of the carriage must be outlined with reflective tape that is visible from at least 150 meters.

The emblem must be displayed on the rear of any slow moving vehicle used on public roads. As an example, if a tractor is towing a wagon, the wagon must have a clearly, visible **SMV**, as well as the tractor or other vehicle type that is towing the wagon.

A statute or law for specific dimensions designs its shape, color, and placement of the **SMV**. The emblem is an equilateral shape that is 14 inches high (with a variance of plus or minus .03 inches). It must have fluorescent orange material with a border of red retro-reflective material. The fluorescent design is highly visible in the daylight, and the lights of approaching vehicles illuminate the red retro-reflective border. The American Society of Agricultural Engineers, the American Standard Institute, and the Society of Automotive Engineers designed the emblem.

These institutes require a strict placement of the emblem on vehicles. It should be mounted as close to the center of the rear of the vehicle as possible, with the point of the triangle pointing upward. It should be at a right angle or perpendicular to the direction of travel so that it can be seen by vehicle approaching from the rear. The lower edge of the emblem should be at least two (2 feet) and not more than six (6 feet) above the ground.

### OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES-

- ✓ The emblem must be maintained. The sun will fade the finish, so it will have to be replaced as it gets real dim.
- ✓ It should be kept real clean, free of mud and debris.
- ✓ Check the emblem periodically to be sure that is secure in the bracket.

### FSA -cont'd-

The **SMV** sign is for vehicles only. The use of a slow moving vehicle sign on a fixed object such as a roadside mailbox or a driveway marker, is prohibited if it can be seen from the road. **SMV** signs attached to mailboxes or posts must be removed. Use reflectors or reflective tape instead. Municipalities can still post caution signs to warn motorists that slow moving vehicles often travel on their roads.