

Police have road-safety tips for rural motorists

From the desk of

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Caledon roads see increased farm equipment traffic in the spring and during harvest, so drivers should be prepared and keep the following safety tips in mind.

? Slow down as soon as you spot a piece of farm equipment. In fact, if you see something ahead that is neither car nor truck, slow down ? at least until you have identified the object.

? Watch for hand signals. Just because a tractor veers right does not mean the operator is pulling over for you to pass. The sheer size of farm equipment often dictates the necessity of wide turns ? hence the veer right. If a tractor operator is signaling you to wait, trust him. He has a much higher vantage point than you.

? Be aware of the triangular Slow-Moving-Vehicle (SMV) sign. Only use SMV signs on slow moving vehicles, not to mark driveways or for other non-vehicular uses. Not only are these actions illegal in many areas, they devalue the purpose of SMV signs, putting producers at risk when moving equipment.

? Watch for flashing amber lights. This type of light often marks the far right and left of farm equipment. Also watch for reflective tape marking extremities and sides of equipment.

? Do not speed past farm machinery. Even when you may pass safely and legally, the turbulence created by your vehicle may cause the machinery to sway and become unstable.

? Do not pull out in front of slow moving vehicle and then slow suddenly. A tractor pulling a grain cart does not have the maneuverability of a car. Make sure you have ample space to pass. As with any passing operation, check the rear-view mirror before returning to your travel lane.

? Do not expect equipment to run partly on the road shoulders. Driving with one set of wheels on the pavement and one set on loose-surfaced shoulders substantially increases the risk of overturn or other accident.

? When you meet a piece of equipment on the road, try to find a safe spot to pull over to allow safe and easy passage of the implements.

? Rural motorists are asked to be alert and adjust their driving accordingly. When encountering slow-moving farming equipment, assess the situation. Watch for farm lanes or agribusiness into which the equipment might be turning.

? Also, do not pass until certain the way is clear and make sure the farm equipment operator is aware of your intentions.