

Farm vehicle safety on public highways

Purpose:

To promote the safe use of agricultural machinery on public highways

Why:

To help reduce the risk of an accident which may lead to the damage of vehicles, injury or fatality.

TIAH Capability Framework area:

This aligns with the knowledge and skills in the Health and Safety area.

<https://tiah.org/tiah-capability-framework>

Talk leader instructions:

- Prepare to do the talk in a suitable/quiet location with no distractions
- Consider using some of the resources as part of the talk, e.g. showing a video
- Engage with participants, ask questions and give everyday examples
- Conclude with a brief review
- Get everyone to sign the form. Make sure to write the name of the farm and the date. Keep a copy in your Health and Safety records
- Ensure all participants have access to a copy of this document to refer to once the session has finished. This could be electronic and emailed or printed

Notes:

Background

Crop fields and livestock are often located away from the farmyard or horticultural site, meaning that farmers and farm workers are required to drive farm vehicles on public roads. This can pose a higher safety risk.

If you operate a farm vehicle, you must be fully trained, competent, and aware of the risks, especially before venturing onto public highways



Main learning points



While agricultural vehicles are only involved in a very small percentage of total road accidents, when they are, the results can be devastating, so there are steps you can take to follow best practice and help keep everyone safe too.

You should be aware of the legal requirements for driving various farm machinery on public highways. For example, you must be of a certain age and hold a specific licence for the type, size and weight of a vehicle you can drive. Speed limits can also vary for farm vehicles so it's always best to check on the GOV.UK website if you're unsure what your maximum speed is for the vehicle you are using: <https://gov.uk/guidance/agircultural-vehicle-lincences-and-fuel>

It may seem unfair to operators that their presence on the road can cause frustration among other road users, however, **the police advise drivers who get stuck behind farm vehicles to avoid taking risks when overtaking, set off earlier and plan enough time for their journey.**

If traffic is building up behind you, pull over when it's safe and legal to do so. Rule 169 of the Highway Code states: **"Do not hold up a long queue of traffic, especially if you are driving a large or slow-moving vehicle. Check your mirrors frequently, and if necessary, pull in where it is safe and let traffic pass."**

Tractor-mounted fore-end loader or telescopic materials handlers

If you're travelling with a tractor-mounted fore-end loader or telescopic materials handler on the public highway, the forks or any other front-mounted attachment) should be:

- **Removed and carried elsewhere (e.g. on a trailer)**
- **Folded back and secured**
- **Covered/protected by an appropriate guard**

If you don't follow this guidance, the attachment may be regarded as dangerous, and you could be prosecuted for dangerous driving.

Notes:



Note: You should never travel on the public highway with the attachment carrying a load, as this may contravene road traffic legislation. If you're turning, don't lift or lower the loader at the same time, as this can affect stability. Keeping the loader as low as possible will help stability and improve visibility from the cab.

If you're waiting to pull out of a gateway onto a public road with the loader raised and projecting beyond the machine, this could create a risk to other road users. For further information go to the HSE website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/machinery/farm-vehicles-5.htm>

Tractor and trailer lighting

There are legal requirements for lighting on tractors and trailers which must be followed. Broken, or obscured lights can cause accidents.



Q: Do you know the lighting requirements for travelling on the road? See how many you can come up with.

Responses might include:

General guidance

- All agricultural motor vehicles must have two red lamps at the rear and two white lamps at the front
- Even if lights are not required, they must be clean, unobscured and in good working order – even in daylight
- Lights must be switched on and working if you are driving when it's dark
- If headlamps are fitted, they must be lit during daylight hours if visibility becomes poor due to fading light or bad weather
- Never display any white light to the rear (e.g. work lights) as these can dazzle other motorists. It's an offence, unless the vehicle is using reversing lights whilst travelling backwards
- Work lights at the front can dazzle motorists, even if they are pointing down and it's an offence as they are in the wrong position (too high) for road use
- If equipment covers the lights i.e. mounted or trailed equipment, then extra lights must be fitted to the equipment
- Amber beacons are required on all vehicles and trailers that can't exceed 25 mph and are driven on an unrestricted dual carriageway, and must be visible from the front, back and sides of a tractor and trailer

Tractors

- Tractors should have, two white front side lights, a number plate light, two red taillights, and two red rear reflectors
- Vehicles built after 1986 that travel over 15 mph require dipped headlights, indicators and hazard warning lights
- Vehicles built after 1986 and which travel over 25 mph need two red stop lamps
- Fast tractors that are permitted to travel at 40 mph must have brake lamps, dipped beam headlamps, main beam headlamps, direction indicators, hazard warning signals and rear fog lamps

Q: What are the lighting requirements if you're using a trailer?

Responses might include:

- Trailers must have red taillights, two red reflectors and a number plate light. Unless a trailer was built before October 1990, it should also have indicator lights
- Brake lights on trailers only need to be fitted if obligatory brake lights on the tractor are obscured. However, it's recommended to have both indicators and brake lights fitted to a trailer as many accidents happen when a tractor is turning right, and the motorist cannot see brake lights or indicators
- Trailers should have front position lights fitted if it's more than 1.6 metres wide or less than 2.3 metres in length and first used before 1 October 1985. If it's more than 5 metres long, side retro reflectors should be fitted every 3 metres

Suggestions/ ideas:

Notes:

Suggestions/ ideas:

Discussion points 7 minutes

Driving on a public highway is a different experience from driving on a farm site or track, and therefore, the risks can increase.

Q: What do you think the main risks are?

Responses might include:

- The size and weight of farm machinery is bigger compared to other vehicles such as cars or motorcycles
- You're sharing the road with other road users including motorists, cyclists and horse riders – which you may not encounter on a farm site
- Farm vehicles are usually slower than other vehicles on the road, which can cause other road users to become impatient and make irrational decisions such as overtaking when it's not safe to do so
- There are also more pedestrians to be aware of such as hikers, runners, children and dog walkers
- Be aware of different types of roads – for example a narrower road with blind spots is very different to driving on a farm track or in a field where you may have more open space and better visibility
- Turning a large vehicle in or out of a field or farmyard onto a public road poses a higher risk than pulling in or out of a field into another field – especially if you have a trailer or other implement attached

Q: How could you keep yourself and others safe when driving farm machinery on a public highway?

Responses might include:

- Check that the vehicle is in good working order before you go
- Check that the mirrors are clean and adjusted, the lights and beacons are working, the brakes are in good working order, the number plates are visible, and the tyres are inflated correctly
- Always keep a charged mobile phone with you, so you can call the emergency services if you're involved in an accident or incident. Only call when parked and the engine is switched off
- Download the What3Words app so that the emergency services can locate you quickly <https://what3words.com>
- Use the appropriate seat and seatbelt, and only allow passengers (over 13) to travel with you if the manufacturer has fitted a seat and seatbelt
- Maintain braking systems as per the manufacturer's guidance
- Take care when pulling out of fields or gateways onto roads – this can be especially difficult with front-mounted vehicles and hedges and trees can also compromise visibility
- Indicate well in advance so that other road users are aware of your intentions and double-check your mirrors
- Take particular care when turning right and use your mirrors as vehicles may be attempting to overtake you
- Plan journey routes and timings – avoid busy periods on the roads if possible, and be aware of any weight or height restrictions on your route

Your manager may consider installing front and rear dashcams. These can be helpful in promoting responsible behaviour and establishing liability if an incident occurs.

Summary/Wrap-up

 1 minute

Driving a farm vehicle on a public road can increase the risks of accidents. Before driving a farm vehicle on a public highway make sure you and anyone you supervise is trained, competent and understands the risks and legal requirements for driving on public roads to help keep themselves and others safe.

Resources:

- GOV.UK: Agricultural vehicle, licences, tax information and fuel: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/agricultural-vehicle-licences-and-fuel>
- NFU: Rural Road Safety Advice for Tractors: <https://www.nfumutual.co.uk/news-and-stories/rural-road-safety-advice-for-tractors>
- NFU: Tractor and trailer lighting on the road – what are the rules? <https://nfuonline.com/updates-and-information/tractor-and-trailer-lighting-on-the-road-what-are-the-rules/>
- HSE: Travelling with a tractor mounted fore-end loader or telescopic materials handler on the public highway: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/machinery/farm-vehicles-5.htm>
- HSE: Pedestrian safety: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/topics/machinery/pedestrian-safety.htm>
- Farmers Weekly: Rural road safety in the spotlight: <https://fwi.co.uk/news/drive-it-home-rural-road-safety-in-the-spotlight>
- Farmers Weekly: Know How / Road legal: <https://www.fwi.co.uk/machinery/road-legal>
- HSE: Using tractors safely – a step-by-step-guide: <https://hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg185.pdf>

Toolbox Talk participants

Toolbox Talk: **Farm vehicle safety on public highways**

Name of farmDate

Talk leader name.....

Name	Signature	Date