

Rail crossing tips for farm machinery operators

Operation Lifesaver, Inc. (OLI) and the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety (NECAS) remind farm machinery operators to stay alert where field and farmstead access roads cross train tracks. These farm-rail crossings are largely unmarked (no warning lights), bells, gates or signs) and require extra caution on the part of farm machinery operators. OLI and NECAS urge all farmers, ranchers and their employees who must use farm-rail crossings to remember:

Field to Field – Yield to Trains!

Stopping safely at farm-rail crossings

- Stop no closer than 15 feet from the nearest rail. Allow extra distance for front-mounted buckets and chemical tanks on farm tractors.
- To better hear the train, open machinery cab windows, turn off radios and fans, and remove headphones.
- Make sure that the farm machinery is properly lined up with the farm-rail crossing to ensure safe passage over the train tracks.
- While stopped, look carefully in each direction for approaching trains, moving head and eyes to see around

obstructions such as mirrors, windshield pillars and passengers.

- Winter conditions can create additional hazards: snow can muffle the sound of an approaching train. Make sure that equipment does not slide onto the tracks when snow and ice cover the road.

Resume travel

- Before resuming, make sure there is enough room on the other side of the train track or tracks to fully clear without stopping. Don't stop on the tracks to open or close gates!
- Make sure that any towed equipment does not become unhitched while crossing.
- Watch wagons and other equipment during the crossing so loaded materials are not dislodged onto the train tracks.

Be aware of special situations

Some farm equipment is uniquely designed for field work and does not transport well across farm-rail crossings.

- Do not attempt a crossing with low-



slung equipment that can become lodged on "humped" crossings.

- When operating new farm machinery over farm-rail crossing for the first time, make sure that heavier and wider equipment can be safely moved over the crossing.

Some farm equipment transports toxic materials, including pesticides and fertilizers.

- Take extra care with nurse tanks containing anhydrous ammonia. Hitch pins can become dislodged when moving across rough farm-rail crossings.

Some farm equipment hauls heavy commodities, including bulk manure and grain.

• Take extra care that farm tractors towing loaded bulk manure tanks will fully clear the crossing quickly and safely.

• Take extra care with loaded grain wagons that could tip over if the wheels are not properly lined up with the crossing.

If for any reason you get stuck on the track, get out of the equipment and away from the track.

- Check any signposts or signal housings at the crossing for emergency notification information, including a 1-800 emergency notification number.

- Look for a U.S. Department of Transportation number (U.S. DOT), six digits plus a letter, that will help you identify the crossing location.

- Immediately call the 1-800 emergency notification number, if available. If not, call 911 and provide the 911 dispatcher with the crossing location, the U.S. DOT number, if available, and all identifiable landmarks. Do not hang up the phone unless instructed to do so.

New ND child safety seat law now in effect

Children to age 7 must be buckled in a child restraint



Children in North Dakota will be riding more safely because of changes in the state's child passenger safety law, says Carol Meidinger, director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Injury Prevention Program.

Effective August 1, children younger than 7 are required to ride in a child restraint (car seat or booster seat) – unless they weigh more than 80 pounds and are more than 57 inches (4'9") tall. Children ages 7 through 17 will need to use a seat belt or child restraint. The revised law carries a penalty of \$25 and 1 point against the license of the driver.

"Many children affected by the new law will need to use booster seats to comply," Meidinger said. "Booster seats raise the child up, helping the seat belt fit correctly. However, booster seats must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. For vehicles without lap and shoulder belts, the new law allows a lap belt to be used for children who weigh more than 40 pounds."

Booster seats come in two general types – backless boosters and high-back boosters. High-back boosters are recommended if the vehicle seatback is too low to protect the child from neck injuries in a rear collision.

The North Dakota Department of Health offers the following guidelines to help parents comply with the law and select the right child restraint for their child's age and weight:

- Babies should ride in rear-facing seats until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 20 pounds.

- Children who weigh more than 20 pounds and are at least 1 year of age should ride in a forward-facing car seat with harness until they weigh 40 pounds.

- Children who weigh between 40 and 80 pounds and are less than 4'9" tall should use a booster seat.

- Kids who weigh more than 80 pounds and are more than 4'9" usually can fit into a lap and shoulder belt.

However, there may very well be children who should remain in a booster seat beyond the new law's age of 7 in order that they ride safely. To determine if a child is ready to sit in the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt system without a booster seat, they should be able to:

- Sit with their back against the vehicle seat back.
- Have their knees bent at the edge of the seat without slouching.
- Have their feet on the floor.
- Have the lap part of the belt over their hip bones and not over the soft abdominal tissue.

- Have the shoulder strap part of the belt cross at the middle of the chest and shoulder and not at the neck.

It is important that the child be able to ride in this position for the entire ride.

Depending on the size of the vehicle and the stature of the child, they may require a booster seat for proper and safe positioning even after age 7.

Booster seats come in a variety of sizes and styles. It is recommended that a child remain in a harness-style car seat until they are 40 pounds. Once ready to move to a booster seat, they may use a high back seat or a low-back seat (belt positioning booster).

For more information on child passenger safety, please contact SAFE KIDS Grand Forks at 701-780-1489 or chanson@altru.org. A fact sheet providing information about the safest way for children to ride in cars is available on the Department of Health's website at www.ndhealth.gov. Click on "Child Passenger Safety Law Fact Sheet" in the What's New section of the website.