

# From the tractor

If you've been out driving on our rural, two-lane roads recently, you have probably encountered farm equipment moving between fields. Farmers are heading back into the fields, busily prepping and planting this year's crops,

That means it is a good time to remind drivers, especially in rural areas of the state, to be on the lookout for farm equipment on the road, to be patient when you encounter tractors and to be careful in passing farm equipment.

We are just at the beginning of the 2018 season, and we have already heard of one accident involving a collision between a car and farm equipment. I have also heard of reports of drivers passing tractors in no-passing zones. I can also personally recall some near-misses I had on my own tractors over the years, along with some collisions that have occurred.

I sincerely hope we don't have any more accidents this year, but I know this is a challenging time for farmers who are just trying to get to work. Granted their mode of transportation may be a little less traditional, but it is still important for drivers to be alert so we can all safely share the road.

I want to pass along a few tips to help all drivers navigate the rules of the road for a safer experience all around.

- First, slow down in rural areas. It takes 224 feet of space on dry pavement for a car traveling 55 miles per hour to stop for drivers with an average reaction time.
- Don't tailgate farm tractors on the road. It can be especially difficult for farmers to hear when another vehicle is approaching because of noise from the tractor and tires.
- Don't assume a farmer can see your vehicle. Stay farm enough behind so he can see you in his rearview mirrors.
- Look for yellow farmer warning signs. Most roads near farms post these signs of a farmer silhouetted on a tractor. This signals drivers to be on the lookout for farm equipment.

I hope folks will remember that farmers are not on the road with farm equipment because they want to be. Trust me, they are on the road in this equipment because they need to be. At the end of the day, we all benefit from their work growing food, fiber and fuel products we all rely on and enjoy.

Slow down in farming areas and stay safe so everyone comes home to their families and loved ones.