



Safer Tractor Operations: Introduction¹

Carol J. Lehtola and Charles M. Brown²

Tractors might be thought of principally as a farm machine, but they are used in many different workplaces and by a wide variety of people, from professionals to hobbyists. Tractor incidents are responsible for many injuries and deaths in the U.S. every year either through unsafe operation or because the equipment itself is not up to modern safety standards. In fact, tractors account for the majority of farm-related deaths.

Florida AgSafe, the Florida Agricultural Safety Program, has created a series of publications to be used in training and education in the safer use of tractors. The present publication introduces the series that is composed of six comprehensive circulars for different professions/owners. In addition, there are eight fact sheets that each focus on one specific area of tractor safety.

The circulars are (IFAS Publication Number is in parentheses):

- Safer Tractor Operations for Agricultural Employers (CIR1249)
- Safer Tractor Operations for Privately Owned and Operated Farms and Ranches (CIR1250)

- Safer Tractor Operations for Home and Acreage Owners (CIR1251)
- Safer Tractor Operations for Landscape Maintenance and Horticultural Industries (CIR1252)
- Safer Tractor Operations for Rescue Workers and Emergency Personnel (CIR1253)
- Safer Tractor Operations for Farm Workers/Employees (CIR1254)

These publications are ideal for use as the basis of tractor safety programs. They cover many topics related to safer tractor use and include training activities, pre-post tests, and record-keeping tools.

Safer tractor operations are divided in this series into three parts: safer environments, safer equipment, and safer operators. This approach gives the various audiences for these publications a systematic way of examining and improving their safety performance.

- The eight fact sheets in the series are:
- Getting Started on the Right Foot: Dangers of Bypass Starting (AE299)

1. This document is ABE342, one of a series of the Agricultural and Biological Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Published: April 2003. Reviewed January 2009. Please visit the EDIS Web site at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. Carol J. Lehtola, Associate Professor, and Charles M. Brown, Coordinator for Information/Publication Services, Agricultural and Biological Engineering Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, 32611.

- When Two's a Crowd: Dangers of Extra Riders on Tractors (AE300)
- Filling Gas Cans Safely (AE301)
- Avoid the Invisible Hazard: Know about Soil Shear Lines (AE305)
- Shortcuts Are Short-sighted! or, Invest Seconds, Save Lives (AE306)
- Ready or Not? Get Ready with a Tractor Operator Checklist (AE307)
- Yee-Haa! Formula for a Successful Tractor Rodeo (AE308)
- Hand-me-down Hazards: Dangers of Used Equipment (AE309)

Additional materials may be added from time to time.

You can locate these publications by visiting the Florida AgSafe Web site:

www.flagsafe.ufl.edu

or the UF/IFAS Extension Publications Web site, EDIS, at:

edis.ifas.ufl.edu

Then click on "Agricultural Safety."

Other publications that may be of interest to those starting an agricultural safety program are:

- Small Farmer's Resources for Safety (ABE330)
- Agricultural Employer's Resources for Safety (ABE331)

A number of OSHA publications that are relevant to safer tractor operations have been selected and are available through the Web sites listed above.

A small sample of these titles follows:

- Roll-Over Protective Structures (ROPS) for Tractors Used in Agricultural Operations -- OSHA Standard 1928.51 (AE293)

- Occupational Noise Exposure: OSHA Standard 1910.95 (AE141)

- Guarding of Farm Field Equipment, Farmstead Equipment, and Cotton Gins -- OSHA Standard 1928.57 (AE134)

"Safety is the Bottom Line" appears on all the publications in the Safer Tractor Operations Series. This slogan does not mean that safety is the last thing to consider in planning an operation--safety is the first thing to consider.

The idea behind this slogan is that safety practices always show up on the bottom line. People work to improve their lives, not damage them. But if proper safety precautions have not been taken, or if adequately safe conditions or equipment haven't been provided, it will show up on the bottom line. It might sometimes be cheaper in the short run to avoid fixing a guard or not purchasing properly grounded equipment, or not tapering a field away from a drainage canal. But if negligence leads to injury or death, the cost are numerous: lost livelihoods, lost lives, lost earning capacity, lower morale, lower profits, higher premiums... the list goes on.

Do the right thing: Make the workplace safe. It will pay all sorts of dividends.