

# Tractor Overturns

Farm tractors are essential to modern, high output agriculture. Without them, food production would fall far short of meeting our needs. Unfortunately, tractors are generally the farm machinery identified with the most hazards in crop production agriculture. Each year, there is an estimated 350 to 450 fatalities due to tractors. Thousands more suffer disabling injuries, and millions of dollars are lost due to property damage, medical bills, time off work, reduced productivity, and added insurance costs.

Tractor related incidents including overturns, runovers, entanglements in power drivelines, and highway collisions account for nearly 250 deaths annually. These deaths make up more than 1/3 of the agricultural-related fatalities. It is estimated that 80% of farm children routinely ride along on tractors with family members. Children under the age of 15 account for almost 90% of all fatalities due to extra riders. Farm children typically begin operating a tractor at a young age. A Kentucky study revealed that the mean age for beginning solo tractor operations is 11.4 years for boys and 12 years for girls. Sixty-four percent of children who have driven tractors begin operation of the tractor by age 12. 41% of 10-15 year old Kentucky children drive a tractor alone on the farm (Browning, Westneat, & Szeluga, 2001)

The roll-over protective structure (ROPS) and seat belt, when worn, are the two most important safety devices to protect operators from death during tractor overturns. It is important to remember that the ROPS does not prevent tractor overturns; rather, it prevents the operator from being crushed during an overturn. Using ROPS and seat belts is estimated to be 99% effective in preventing deaths or serious injury in an overturn.



## **When operating a tractor, remember to:**

- Securely fasten your seat belt if the tractor has a ROPS.
- Where possible, avoid operating the tractor near ditches, embankments, and holes.
- Reduce speed when turning, crossing slopes, and on rough, slick, or muddy surfaces.
- Stay off slopes too steep for safe operation. Watch where you are going, especially at row end, on roads, and around trees.
- Do not permit passengers.
- Be sure everyone is clear before moving.
- Operate the tractor smoothly-no jerky turns, starts, or stops.
- Hitch only to the drawbar and hitch points recommended by tractor manufacturers.
- When the tractor is stopped, set brakes securely and use park lock if available. Remove the keys.

Train young persons to operate tractors properly, not only to physically manipulate the machine, but to recognize hazards and know how to avoid them.

**Farm Safety**



**Just Kids**