

Tips for a Safer Hay Season

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Each year, injuries occur to farmers and farm workers who are rushing to get hay put up before the next thunderstorm.

Here is a checklist of equipment inspection and safe haying practices that can be posted on or near mowers and balers.

- ✓ **Know your operator's manual.**
These manuals contain vital information for the safe and efficient operation for each piece of machinery. Every potential operator should familiarize themselves with the manuals.
- ✓ **Be able to communicate with others.**
It is a good idea to have a cellular phone or CB radio handy. Regular "check-in" times should be established.
- ✓ **Inspect PTO shafts.**
PTO shaft injuries are among the more deadly, disabling, and disfiguring hazards on the farm. Make sure all shields are intact and in place. Avoid wearing loose-fitting clothing while working around PTO powered equipment.
- ✓ **Turn off the engine and take the keys with you before clearing or repairing equipment.**
A large percentage of injuries occur to people who try to fix or clear equipment "on the run". Shortcuts like this may save a few moments, but the pain of an injury and time lost while healing make taking risks unacceptable.
- ✓ **Handle and transport bales correctly.**
Always use bale clamps or forks when loading round bales with a front-end loader. They will

prevent the bale from rolling back onto the operator. Hay should be secured and stable before transported. Make sure the load you are moving is not too wide. Always make sure the load being pulled is no heavier than the pulling unit.

- ✓ **Inspect mirrors, lights and SMV emblems.**
Because hay equipment frequently travels on roadways, make sure you can see and be seen with mirrors, lights, and SMV emblems. A flagger vehicle behind the hay equipment when in transit would be helpful to the operator and the traffic behind you.
- ✓ **Equip tractors with rollover protection structures.**
Wearing seat belts and installing a ROPS will provide the greatest protection to the operator in case of a tractor rollover, and may provide protection from large, round bales rolling back on the operator.
- ✓ **Know your endurance limit.**
Incidents and injuries often occur to people who are physically and mentally "worn-out". When you become tired or drowsy in the field, your mental alertness is compromised, and you may skip safety procedures to save time.

For additional information see MU Guide Sheets G1250, G1955, or G1957, contact your local Outreach and Extension Center, or the MU Extension Rural Safety and Health Program at 1.800.995.8503.

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