

## Operating a Tractor

**Tractors are the main cause of accidental deaths on farms. Over the years, many farmers, farm workers and others living on or visiting farms, have been killed or seriously injured falling from moving tractors, being run over by tractors, or being crushed when a tractor rolls sideways or backwards.**

### Spot the hazard

Regularly check for hazards relating to tractors, attached implements and field conditions. Hazard areas could include mechanical parts, operator training, other people, work procedures, unsafe jacking, climatic conditions, chemicals used, uneven terrain, and any other potential causes of an injury or a hazardous incident. Keep a record to ensure identified hazards are assessed and controlled.

### Assess the risk

Once a potential hazard has been identified, assess the likelihood of an injury or hazardous incident occurring. For example, risk to children playing near a tractor will vary, depending on what the tractor operator is doing, how close they are to the tractor and whether the operator knows they are there. Consider ways of minimizing risk.

### Make the changes

Here are some ways of improving tractor operator safety:

- Read and follow safety procedures in the manufacturer's manual.
- Ensure an approved cab or roll-over protective structure (ROPS) is fitted.
- Fit and use a seatbelt on tractors with ROPS.
- If there is a risk from falling objects, fit a fall-on protective structure (FOPS).
- To reduce risk of back strain, fit a seat with side restraints and a backrest.
- Wear hearing protection, and remember, not all tractor cabs are sound proof.
- Keep children away from tractors and machinery.
- Remove starter keys when tractors are not in use.
- Have an up-to-date maintenance schedule.
- Follow safe maintenance and jacking procedures.
- Ensure the operator is properly trained for each type of tractor work.
- Always mount and dismount on a tractor's left side - to avoid controls.
- Adjust the seat so all controls are safely and comfortably reached.
- Keep all guards in place, including the power take-off (PTO).
- Operate the self-starter from the operator position only.
- Never carry passengers.

### When operating a tractor

- Drive at speeds slow enough to retain control over unexpected events.
- Reduce speed before turning or applying brakes.
- Watch out for ditches, logs, rocks, depressions and embankments.
- On steep slopes, without a trailed implement, reverse up for greater safety.
- Engage the clutch gently at all times, especially when going uphill or towing.
- Use as wide a wheel track as possible on hillsides and sloping ground.
- Descend slopes cautiously in low gear, using the motor as a brake.
- Never mount or dismount from a moving tractor.
- Ensure the park brake is on and operating effectively before dismounting.
- Take short breaks regularly when working long hours.

### When towing implements

- Fit attachments according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always attach implements to the draw bar or the mounting points provided by the manufacturer.
- Never alter, modify or raise the height of the draw bar unless provided for by the manufacturer.

- Regularly check safety pins on towed lift-wing implements, to ensure they are not worn.
- Ensure all guards on towed implements are in place before operating.
- Never hitch above the centre line of the rear axle, around the axle housing or to the top link pin.
- Never adjust or work on implements while they are in motion.
- Never attach implements unless the PTO shaft is guarded.
- When parking, always lower the three point linkage and towed implement.

### **To avoid strain injury**

- Adjust the tractor seat for back support and comfort.
- When buying a tractor, ensure seating is safe and comfortable.
- Check seat height, seat depth, back rest height and angle, fore and aft movement, seat tilt, firm padding, partial pivoting (if you have to spend long periods looking behind you), and vibration-absorbing suspension.
- Dismount every hour or so, and spend 5 or 10 minutes doing something active.
- Plan for your next tractor to include suitably low steps, hand grips, adequate doorway and cab space, and a safe mounting platform.
- Dismount by climbing down - not jumping down - and use each provided foot and hand hold.