MOTORISTS AND FARMERS URGED TO SHARE THE ROAD DURING HARVEST SEASON

Drivers Should Expect Farm Equipment on Rural Routes

ANNAPOLIS, MD (September 27, 2018) – The fall has arrived, and farmers will be using combines and other large, slow moving equipment during the harvest period. The Maryland Department of Transportation joined the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Maryland Farm Bureau to discuss driver safety as motorists traveling Maryland highways and rural roads likely will share the road with farm equipment from one of Maryland's 12,300 farms. The harvest season extends between September and the beginning of November.

"Farmers are legally allowed to operate farm equipment on public roadways and there are times when farm vehicles must operate on highways to move between farm and field," said Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. "I encourage all motorists to be patient when traveling on roads near Maryland farms and drive with caution to ensure the safety of motorists and farmers."

"When traveling this fall along rural routes including major U.S. routes and Maryland arterials, expect to encounter a farm equipment on the road as well," said MDOT SHA Administrator Gregory Slater. "We will place portable electronic signs along major farming routes to remind drivers that the harvest season is here, and that they should approach and pass farm equipment carefully."

"Maryland farmers are taking every safety precaution available to protect motorists and themselves while traveling in equipment on the roads, including slow-moving vehicle signs, flashing lights, and raising all equipment attachments," said Maryland Farm Bureau President Chuck Fry. "Please help protect the men and women who work hard every day to produce your food, fuel and fiber, especially during this harvest season when there are more combines and farm trucks on the roads."

This harvest season MDOT SHA, the Department of Agriculture and the Farm Bureau are working together to educate drivers to expect farm equipment on rural routes, and to approach these vehicles with caution. Harvesting farm equipment is very large, and likely will share travel lanes while working along farmland adjacent to Maryland roads. The Farm Bureau has selected strategic locations for MDOT SHA to position electronic message signs along Maryland routes, such as US 301, throughout the State. Additionally, MDOT SHA will also reinforce the harvest safety message through social media.

If you encounter farm equipment, a farmer understands that your trip is being delayed, so he or she will pull off of the road at the first available safe location to allow you to pass. Do not assume that the farmer can immediately move aside. Road shoulders may be soft, wet or steep, and this can cause a farm vehicle to tip, or the shoulder may be unable to support a heavy farm vehicle.

The following tips will help ensure the safety of motorists, passengers, and operators of slow-moving equipment:

- If a farmer has pulled off the road to allow you to pass, or if he or she cannot pull off the road and you feel you must pass, do so with caution.
- Be watchful of vehicles behind you that may also try to pass.
- If you must enter the oncoming lane of traffic, do not pass unless you can see clearly ahead of both you and the vehicle you will pass.
- If there are any curves or hills ahead that may block your view or the view of oncoming vehicles, do not pass.
- Do not pass if you are in a designated "No Passing Zone" or within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevation structure, or tunnel.
- Do not assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is going to turn right or is letting you pass. Due to the size of some farm implements, the farmer must execute wide left-hand turns. If you are unsure, check the operator's hand signals and check the left side of the road for gates, driveways or any place a farm vehicle may turn.

For more information about agriculture in Maryland, visit mda.maryland.gov or roads.maryland.gov.

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