Prevent Injury During Fall Harvest

*Hardin County* – Safety should always be a priority within the farm operation, especially at harvest. Consider that it is a time that involves long hours and the need for multiple pieces of farm equipment working simultaneously to complete a crop harvest. The continuous activity, diminished daylight and stresses that can be associated with harvest can often lead to agricultural related injuries. Common injuries during fall harvest include slips, trips and falls; blunt trauma incidents; sprains/strains; and injuries due to fatigue.

Some simple ways to reduce the risk of an injury during harvest include reducing fatigue by trying to get enough sleep. This is your body’s time to rest. Set a pace for yourself by planning out your day’s activities. Take short breaks throughout the day. This could involve getting out of the combine or truck for a few minutes and doing something to get away from the equipment to revitalize.

A farm equipment operator should always follow the procedures in the operator’s manual of equipment for safe operation, maintenance, and troubleshooting. Keep your equipment properly maintained and check all guards to make sure all are in position and correctly fitted before starting work. Ensure that the equipment has adequate lighting for working in the dark. Increase caution when working in early morning or late evening when daylight is diminished.

Farmers need to maintain three points of contact when mounting or dismounting equipment. This would include 1 hand and 2 feet or 2 hands and 1 foot. Ensure that hand holds or railings are in safe operating condition. Exercise caution when steps or walking surfaces are wet or dirty. Avoid jumping off of the last step and anticipate changes in ground elevation or rough terrain when dismounting from the last step. Be alert to your surroundings.
Know where equipment is being positioned and be observant to individuals who may be walking around equipment. When working with others around farm equipment, maintain eye contact and communicate your intentions with the other person. Use Personal Protective Equipment when appropriate, such as ear plugs, safety glasses, gloves, etc. Utilize respiratory protection such as an N95 respirator in dusty environments.

Safety is also important while on the roads. Utilize safe travel routes between fields, and take into account potential problems with automobile traffic and narrow roadways. It is a good practice to use escort vehicles when needed. Fall harvest can be a busy and stressful time. Take the time to be safe so an accident doesn’t create a hardship for your family or yourself.

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