

Safety Note #8

GENERAL TRACTOR SAFETY



Agriculture remains one of the most hazardous industries in the United States, and tractors continue to be the leading source of fatal injuries on farms.

Most tractor fatalities are preventable through proper operator training, routine equipment inspections, the use of ROPS and seat belts, safe operating practices, and regular maintenance.

Pre-Use Activities

- Thoroughly review and understand information provided in the tractor operator's manual with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Always perform a pre-shift tractor inspection, including checking fluid levels, lights and signals, tires, and guards and shields. Inspect tractor for loose hydraulic connections and worn or loose parts such as hitch pins or lug nuts.
- If a tractor fails the pre-shift inspection, notify your supervisor and remove the tractor from service by attaching a red tag that states "DO NOT USE." Complete red tag with appropriate information.
- Annual tractor training is required by California regulations ([Title 8, Section 3664 b](#)) and should incorporate both general tractor training and specific training review on the tractor(s) that employees may use.

Operating Precautions

- Before starting a tractor, look for people or obstructions behind or ahead of the tractor.
- As the tractor begins to move, engage the clutch slowly and evenly – avoid jerky starts, turns, or stops.
- Never carry passengers on a tractor.
- If the tractor has a roll-overprotective structure (ROPS), the seat belt must be used.
- Never attach implements unless the power take-off (PTO) shaft is guarded.
- Always hitch towed loads to the tractor drawbar.
- Avoid operating a tractor within **six feet** of ditches, holes, depressions, and embankments.
- Reduce speed when turning on roads or at row ends, crossing slopes, or driving on rough, slick, or muddy surfaces.
- Do not operate tractors on slopes too steep for safe operation.
- Descend slopes in low gear while using the tractor motor as a brake.
- Never adjust or work on implements unless the tractor is shut off and the implement is deenergized.
- When parking, always lower the three-point linkage and towed implement.
- Take regular breaks when operating tractors for long periods of time.
- In order, **tractor shutdown procedures are**: (1) setting the PTO lever in **neutral**; (2) engaging the parking brake or shifting the transmission lever to the **park** position; (3) and turning **off** the engine.

