

#64 GENERAL TRACTOR SAFETY

According to information available from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, tractor overturns caused an average of 101 fatalities per year between 1992 and 2005.

Operating Restrictions

- Farm tractors (20 horsepower or more) shall not be operated by 4-H members less than 17 years old (4-H YDP Program Policy Handbook, Chapter 11, Section XIV. A.).
- 4-H members under 17 years old may operate lawn tractors (less than 20 horsepower) as part of a 4-H YDP project or Lawn Tractor skills contest activities, provided that safe operating principles are made an integral part of the curriculum or contest (4-H YDP Program Policy Handbook, Chapter 11, Section XIV. B.).



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 group leader, parent, or guardian and remove the tractor from service.

Operating Precautions

- It is a recommended safety practice to wear hearing protection when driving a tractor.
- 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-over protective 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 de-energized (i.e., implement energy is discharged).
- When parking, always lower the three point linkage and towed implement and lower the front loader bucket, if there is one.
- Take regular breaks when operating tractors for long periods of time.
- In order, tractor shutdown procedures are: (1) set the PTO lever to neutral; (2) set the transmission to neutral or park; (3) engage the parking brake; (4) and turn off the engine.