



Planting Season

By: Katie Burch, County Extension Agent, Burke Co.
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It is that time of year again. It is time to start planting our row crops, and our producers are diligently working to prepare to break ground. Burke County producers plant over 20,000 acres, each, of peanuts and cotton, and nearly 15,000 acres of corn. With this, our farmers will be moving large farm equipment up and down the road. It is at this time of year we have an increase in collisions, next to harvest season. In Georgia, there is an average of 360 collisions a year between passenger vehicles and farm machinery. Conditions change very quickly, so we must be prepared to expect the unexpected during high-risk times like spring planting season. Whether you are behind the wheel of a tractor or an automobile, drivers must be cautious and aware of their surroundings in order to ensure the safety of everyone.



Farmers can help by taking steps to enhance machinery visibility and make sure all warning flashers, lights and slow moving vehicle emblems are in proper operating condition. When traveling on a public road, consider using an escort vehicle to follow behind if possible. Stay

alert at all times, watch for obstacles that could tip your equipment, and be mindful of high traffic times. While it is often impossible to avoid operating on the road during these times, it may be possible to limit transportation.

For motorists, keep in mind that farm machinery has a legal right to use public roads just as other motor vehicles do. Farm machinery can unexpectedly turn onto a public road and will be traveling at a much slower speed than normal traffic. It is important to quickly identify the equipment and slow down immediately to avoid a collision. When a farm vehicle is involved in a collision, there is often a large difference in the speed of the two vehicles.

Farm machinery should display a slow moving vehicle emblem on the back of their equipment, which will help identify the slow moving pace of the machine. Machinery that is traveling half on the road and half on the shoulder may suddenly move completely onto the road. Extra-wide machines may take up the entire road to avoid hitting mailboxes and road signs. Be mindful that if you cannot see the driver, the driver cannot see you as they may be carrying a load that is blocking their view.

Before passing large farm equipment, be confident there is adequate distance for you to pass and make sure the road is wide enough for you and the machinery to safely share. If you plan to pass, watch for mailboxes, bridges, road signs or any other obstacle that may cause the machine to move to the center of the road. Also, look for turn signals or hand signs signaling a turn. If the farm equipment slows down and fades to the far right, the operator is more than likely preparing to make a left turn, and will do just the opposite when attempting to make a right turn.

When approaching a farm vehicle head-on, it is still important to be aware of your surroundings and possible obstacles the operator may encounter. It would be favorable to slow down to bypass the slow moving machine.

Collisions can be avoided if everyone takes responsibility, exhibits careful driving habits, and has a little extra patience! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Peyton Sapp or Katie Burch at the Burke County Extension office by calling (706) 554-2119.