

Focus on safety

Harvest season is beginning across the state, and for farmers, this means early mornings, long days, and the potential for exhaustion that can lead to accidents.

University of Illinois Extension Specialist and Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Assistant Professor Josie Rudolphi says that agricultural workers can prevent fatigue during this busy time of year by eating protein-packed snacks to maintain energy throughout the day. She also recommends drinking plenty of water, not just caffeinated drinks, and whenever possible, taking frequent breaks, naps, or energizing walks.

For a safe harvest, Illinois Extension also recommends performing routine maintenance and cleaning of equipment including cab windows, checking for electrical hazards, testing and repairing vehicle lights and "slow moving vehicle" signs, watching for overhead electrical hazards, and managing stress.

Combine fires are one of the most common and expensive types of incidents in production agriculture. They can also cause substantial setbacks during harvest. Prevent debris fires by frequently blowing off debris with a portable leaf blower or air compressor and inspect the engine compartment where chaff may have accumulated around bearings, belts, and other moving parts. Check fuel or hydraulic system lines before harvest and replace any leaking, cracked, or worn-looking lines.

When in the field, keep an eye out for power lines, which are a threat to tall or extended farm equipment. Be aware of overhead power lines and plan a safe route. Survey the environment before beginning work, taking note of power lines and their location before moving any equipment or extending augers.

"Always work with a spotter when operating large machinery near power lines," Rudolphi says. "Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance."

Learn more about electrical hazards during harvest season from Safe Electricity.

When driving on public roads, avoid heavy traffic times.

"Since many non-farm drivers are unfamiliar with the size and maneuverability of farm equipment, operators should use their hazards and turn signals diligently," Rudolphi says. "When yielding to oncoming traffic, slow down and be aware of soft shoulders."

Illinois State Police reminds motorists and farmers to use caution and remember that passing farm implements at intersections and no passing zones is unsafe and illegal. Drivers are encouraged to slow down, allow extra travel time, and stay alert by avoiding distracted driving.



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