

Extension Responds: Stress and Safety

Preparing Machinery for A Safe Spring

By Mark Purschwitz

Preparing farm machinery for spring should include checking and repairing anything that may affect the safety of the operator or others who might use or be close to the machine. It's important to keep machinery properly maintained and adjusted because field repairs, adjustments, or anything else that requires the operator to leave the operator station and work on the machine increases the risk of a serious injury. Other items that affect safety, but may not affect the performance of the machinery, also need to be checked, repaired or upgraded.

Some of the things that should be checked are outlined below. Remember this list is not comprehensive.

Lighting and marking for roadway travel

Make sure flashers and turn signals work properly. Retrofit amber flashers and turn signals, if desired. Make sure SMV emblems are clean and bright, and add emblems to implements that block the view of the tractor emblem. You may want to upgrade emblems with new improved retroreflective materials. Add fluorescent and reflective tape to enhance visibility. If you use extremity lighting and marking, make sure it is in proper condition. If you don't currently have extremity lighting and marking, consider adding them to enhance your visibility on the road.

Shields and guards

Broken or modified shields and guards compromise your safety. Check to make sure PTO driveline shields turn freely and independently of the driveline and telescope freely. The driveline shield, tractor master shield, and the corresponding shield on the implement must all be in place to provide protection.

Hydraulic systems and mechanical locks

Check all hoses, fittings, and seals to assure they are in good condition to maintain the integrity of the system and prevent leaks or ruptures that might allow machines to drop unexpectedly. Use a piece of paper or cardboard, not your hand, to check for leaks -- high pressures can inject hydraulic fluid through the skin. Install or inspect mechanical locks that prevent machines from falling during transport or when you are working under a raised machine.

Wheels and tires

Make sure wheels, tires and wheel bearings are ready for road travel and for carrying loads. Under-inflated tires and poorly lubricated bearings can fail unexpectedly with serious consequences.

Chemical application equipment

Check the hoses, valves, fittings and other components on sprayers, planters and other applicators to make sure they are in good condition and have no leaks. Keep clean water available for hand washing and emergency cleanups. Keep proper personal protective equipment, such as gloves and chemical goggles, in a convenient place and use them, especially if you must perform field repairs or adjustments. Make sure tanks have tight covers to prevent spills.

Other things to check

Make sure you have locking hitch pins for all tractors and implements. Keep steps and platforms clean and clear of loose tools to prevent slips and falls. Make sure brakes on tractors and any other machines function properly. Retrofit rollover protection to tractors. Consult the operator's manual for additional safety procedures.

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