



13750 S. Sedona Parkway, Ste 5
Lansing, MI 48906

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Contact: Betsy Braid
Phone: (517) 668-2676

Taking Time for Safety Can Lead to Successful Planting

LANSING, MICH. – As farmers across the nation pull into their fields to begin planting an estimated 88.8 million acres of corn, they are reminded to always follow important safety precautions.

“As farmers plant this year’s crops, we want to remind them that a successful planting season is one in which everyone remains safe,” said Jody Pollok-Newsom, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) executive director.

Planting is one of the highest risk periods for farm injuries or fatalities. Safe planting begins with the prevention of accidents. The National Safety Council makes the following safety recommendations:

- Inspect all planting equipment prior to use, making sure shields and guards are in place and that seatbelts work properly if applicable.
- Never lean or step over a power takeoff (PTO) while it is operating.
- Do not wear loose-fitting clothing around PTO shafts or other moving parts and keep long hair tied back or under a cap.
- Shut down equipment, turn off engine, remove key and wait for moving parts to stop before dismounting equipment.
- Maintain Slow Moving Vehicle (SMV) symbols on all equipment.
- Use extreme caution when driving machinery on roadways.
- Keep all bystanders and children away from all equipment.
- Follow all safety guidelines set by the equipment manufacturers.
- Always read chemical packaging labels. All crop protection chemicals include information on the proper use of the chemical; its proper handling, safe storage and first aid information.
- Obtain Material Safety Data Sheets for the crop protection chemicals that you use, which include health hazard data, spill or leak procedures, and handling information.
- Have on hand and wear the personal protective equipment required by the label. These can include chemical protection goggles and face shields, as well as chemical-resistant gloves, coveralls, boots, hats and aprons.
- Keep crop protection chemicals in storage areas that can be locked to keep bystanders and children out. Be sure to label the storage area as containing chemicals.
- Launder chemical-soiled clothing separately from other laundry and triple rinse.
- Remind all farm employees about farm safety and ensure they have had all appropriate training.

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As farm equipment continues to increase in size and farmers take on land farther from the farm, the threat of motor vehicle and farm equipment accidents increases substantially.

“Farmers are exposed to safety risks year-round, but those safety risks escalate during the planting season. Farmers are particularly busy during this time of year and spend hours driving equipment on busy roadways,” said Pollok-Newsom. “We realize what a hectic time of year this is for all farmers. However, we want to remind them to make sure they take time to slow down and ensure all proper safety precautions are being taken. We also want to remind the general public that farm equipment is moving at a slow pace, so they too need to beware, pay attention and slow down.”

Along with the risks of moving large equipment on public roads, farmers who spend the majority of their time outside are also at a higher risk for developing various forms of skin cancer. Farmers often receive their greatest exposure during the sun’s peak hours of 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. from May to October. Multiple studies over the past several years have indicated a higher incidence of skin cancer fatalities for farmers.

To help reduce their risk of skin cancer, farmers should wear sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats and long-sleeved shirts on a regular basis. When applying sunscreen, the higher the number, the greater the protection from the sun’s harmful rays. During the spring planting season when most farmers spend their time in a tractor cab, it never hurts to take extra precautions against the dangers of the sun.

Headquartered in Lansing, the CMPM is a legislatively-established statewide program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold. Investments are made in the areas of research, education, market development, and new uses in an effort to enhance the economic position of Michigan corn farmers. The CMPM works cooperatively with the Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA), a grassroots-membership association representing the state’s corn grower’s political interests since the 1970’s. Michigan’s corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state’s economy annually and in 2009, Michigan’s corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of more than 309 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.

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