

Agriculture remains one of the more dangerous occupations in North America, but exercising caution can go a long way toward making it safer.

“We’re expecting a potential record crop this year, and it looks like farmers will enjoy good prices, too—yet none of it is worth injury or fatality that could have been prevented by taking appropriate precautions or simply taking time,” said Tim Scheer, chairman of the Nebraska Corn Board. “Grain production and handling continues to be one of the most dangerous aspects of crop production, with more than 1 billion bushels of on-farm storage capacity across Nebraska, grain bins and associated equipment are common on farms and deserve extra attention.”

Scheer also cautioned motorists driving on rural roads which see additional traffic during harvest, increasing the chances for accidents to occur between slower moving farm equipment and vehicles moving at highway speeds.

Rural intersections will have heavier-than-normal travel and dusty conditions may limit visibility, as can sun glare. Standing crops may also block a clear view of oncoming traffic.

Farmers are urged to pay special attention to the safety features of their equipment. Some things to consider:

- Ensure that trained family members and employees are operating powerful equipment.
- Develop a set of safety rules that everyone should follow—and enforce them.
- Check that PTOs are well protected to avoid contact with clothing or people.
- Check to make sure safety shields are in place on all equipment everyday.
- Always be aware of power lines that can come in contact with moving equipment and augers around grain bins.
- Grain bins deserve special attention and caution when grain is being loaded and removed.
  - Take a rest break for a few minutes, go for a short walk or check in with family members.
- Use extra caution when backing equipment. It is easy to overlook something or more importantly, a child.
- Protective eye and ear wear is important in many situations.
- Equip tractors and combines with a fire extinguisher.
- Remind family members and workers that safe practices come before expedience.

“Harvest and fall field work is truly a thrill, with all the sights, sounds and beauty of this time of year,” Scheer said. “So please be careful, as we’d like to see all the farmers and their families out in the fields again come springtime, when cold weather gives way to the excitement of getting the crop in the ground.”