



By Ajia Paolillo

# Staying safe on public roads

**T**he transportation of grove equipment on public roadways is a necessary task. Whether traveling down the road a short distance or hauling equipment for long stretches, it's important to keep in mind road safety and how to protect yourself, others and your equipment. As Florida's population increases, roads are becoming more crowded. With tractors, cars and other motorized vehicles sharing the roadways now more than ever, the potential for serious accidents is high.

## TRAILER TRIPS

When hauling equipment long distances, it is a good practice to use a trailer if possible. Trailers, just like motor vehicles, must be registered to be on the road. Make sure your registration is up to date and the license plate is visible.

Before each trip, check your brake lights and turn signals to make sure they are in good working order. Many times, when lights on a trailer are not working, the lights on the towing vehicle are not visible. This creates the potential for accidents when the

drivers behind the trailer cannot predict a sudden reduction in speed or an upcoming turn.

Before getting on the road, inspect all tie downs for equipment on trailers to ensure they are secure. Double-check tailgates, ramps, hitches and electrical connections to confirm they are securely fastened and chained to the towing vehicle.

Properly maintain tires and always be aware of the weight of your load on your trailer. When loading the trailer, distribute the weight evenly, making sure the load is as balanced as possible.

Secure any pesticides and chemicals that you may also be hauling. Follow the product label instructions for any transportation precautions associated with each chemical.

## TRACTOR TRAVEL

If you will be traveling shorter distances or hauling grove equipment such as an airblast sprayer behind a tractor, keep in mind the requirements for slow-moving vehicles. When driving equipment at speeds of less than 25 miles per hour, the slow-moving vehicle (SMV) sign is required. This sign

must be properly placed in the center of the rear of the tractor, where it is clearly visible. If the airblast sprayer, or other piece of equipment that you are hauling, blocks the view of the tractor's SMV sign, then another SMV sign must be placed at the rear of the towed equipment, again clearly visible to other drivers.

Tractors manufactured or assembled after Jan. 1, 1972, must be equipped with headlamps, red taillights, hazard warning lights and reflectors. Specific requirements for each are listed in the Florida Statutes Chapter 316.2295. The goal of signage, lighting and reflectors is to ensure you and your equipment are highly visible to other motorists.

## OTHER ADVICE

Whether hauling a trailer or driving a tractor down the highway, observing all traffic laws and using extra caution around other motorists is essential. Always use turn signals well in advance to alert other drivers where you are going. The use of hand signals may also be helpful as an added precaution.

When entering onto a roadway, allow yourself enough time to merge into oncoming traffic. Tractors and trailers with heavy equipment cannot accelerate quickly, and oncoming traffic will need to slow down in most cases. Unfortunately, many motorists quickly approach farm equipment on the road and may not allow for enough reaction time to slow down or pass the equipment.

If traffic is backing up behind you, pull over to the side of the road at an appropriate site and let the other motorists pass. This could help avoid unsafe practices such as reckless passing attempts due to impatient motorists behind you. It also helps to free up the roadway.

If possible, transport grove equipment using roads that are not heavily traveled by other motorists or during periods of the day when the roads are not as crowded. Remember to always wear a seatbelt or other safety restraint device when on the road. 🍊

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