

By Russ Pankonin, The Imperial Republican Co-Publisher

Two tragic events in nearby Perkins County in the last eight days provide a somber reminder of just how important it is to keep safety, especially when working around the farm, on the top of our minds.

In one incident, a 32-year-old man lost both hands, most of one arm and part of the other when power was accidentally applied to the grain auger he was working on.

In the other, a young 28-year-old mother with roots in Chase County died when the driver of an ag sprayer didn't see her vehicle on the highway, pulled out from a county road, and struck her vehicle.

These are indeed tragedies that tug at the heart. You don't even have to know anyone involved to feel pain and sorrow in your heart for the families and individuals affected.

With wheat harvest going full bore, it's important that everyone exercise a little more patience and caution.

When a truck operator blows through a stop sign, for whatever reason, he's not only putting himself at danger but others on the roadway as well.

Sure, we all realize you want to get the crop in the bin but the few extra minutes or so spent exercising sound judgement and practicing good safety will pay off much larger in the long run.

Other drivers need to exercise additional safety precautions during harvest time as well. Don't pull out in front of a truck loaded with wheat. These trucks can't stop on a dime. That's the same reason kids need to look both ways when crossing the street on the way to the pool or the store.

Expect the unexpected. Drivers—if you see a vehicle approaching the highway from a county road, don't just assume they will stop. Slow down and make sure the other driver sees your vehicle and stops.

Farmers—don't be in such a rush to get the wheat in that you take shortcuts that can endanger your lives. Agriculture is a risky and dangerous business, especially if safety is not on the top of your mind.

I congratulate and commend the Chase County All-Stars 4-H Club for bringing the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day here last month. Learning good farm safety habits starts when a person's young. In addition, these young people can help pass these habits on to their moms and dads working out in the field.

My dad was the victim of a farm accident that cost him most of his left leg. Yes, he was taking a shortcut he shouldn't have and he paid the price for the next 15 years of his life.

Don't be like my dad. Learn from other's mistakes and misfortune. Even if you don't work on a farm, the workplace can still be a dangerous place with the practice of good safety habits.

Keep safety on your mind all the time. It could well save you and others from a world of heartache and pain.

Top Farm Safety Tips

1. Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.
2. Account for the mental and physical differences associated with age.
3. Be sure to include hazard and safety lessons when training workers.
4. No seat, no rider, no exceptions. Extra riders can cause distractions and block access to

controls. Do not allow children to be extra riders on farm equipment, even if they are helping with chores.

5. Use hydraulic equipment cautiously, and control operations from the tractor seat only.
6. Never attempt to unplug equipment while power is engaged.
7. Use safety identification markers, turn signals, flashing lights, and/or escort vehicles when driving farm equipment on public roads.
8. Carry a fire extinguisher on every piece of powered equipment.
9. Keep small children from playing on, in or under machinery or equipment. Provide an alternate safe-play area.
10. Train and closely supervise youth who will be operating farm machinery and equipment.
11. Do not let children under age 12 operate an all-terrain vehicle.
12. Keep children from playing on, or in, silos and grain bins or wagons.
13. Do not leave children unsupervised around farm ponds or manure pits.
14. Hold monthly family farm safety review sessions.