

Growing Growers

Tips for Safe Tractor Operation

A tractor can reduce time and labor costs to complete tasks on a fruit and vegetable farm. A small, four-wheel drive (4WD) tractor (25 to 55 hp) works well for the small-scale grower. Keep in mind that certain implements — particularly those driven by a power takeoff, or PTO — require a minimum horsepower to operate. Accidents happen when equipment fails or people make mistakes.

Follow these tips for safe tractor operation:

- Avoid injuries by not placing your body in harm's way at any time. Stay clear of the PTO shaft. Do not wear loose-fitting clothing.
- Always wear eye and ear protection.
- Never place your body between the tractor and an implement when attaching the three-point or pull-type hitch.
- When attaching implements, low tractor speed and good hand-signal communication between the operator and the helper are critical to safety.
- Be extremely careful to avoid pinched fingers and toes when attaching implements. Wear boots when operating equipment.
- Drive up and down hills. Do NOT drive across a slope to avoid a rollover.
- If operating on hilly or sloped land, use a tractor with a roll bar.
- Do not turn at high speeds, especially when using a front-end loader.
- Always wear your seat belt. If a tractor rolls over, it will save your life.
- When using a front-loader or forklift, keep the cargo as low to the ground as possible. Be careful when turning the tractor to avoid tipping over.



- Check engine oil and fuel before use. NEVER let a diesel tractor run out of fuel. The injector pump on a diesel engine needs to be primed, which can be difficult to do.
- Transport equipment with caution. Chains and an appropriate trailer that passes legal inspection are essential for safe transport.
- Never operate a piece of machinery while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

To learn more about tractor safety, see *HOSTA Tractor Safety Training* (MF2671) and *Tractor Safety for the Landscaping and Horticultural Services Industry* (MF2708), which is also available in Spanish (MF2708S).

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