



## Illinois farm deaths up; road wrecks No. 2 cause

Illinois farm-related deaths increased for the second consecutive year in 2008-09, according to a survey by Country Financial. Deaths totaled 33, up from 29 in the previous year. The number of deaths in 2008-09 was the highest since 2000-01, when 38 deaths were reported.

Illinois lost 25 farmers and eight non-farm residents. For the ninth year in a row, tractor rollover was the No. 1 cause of death. However, casualties caused by roadway collisions increased in number and surpassed grain bin incidents as the second leading cause of death.

- Thirty percent of farm-related deaths were caused by tractor rollover.
- Roadway collisions increased by five to account for 24 percent of deaths.
- Deaths involving grain bins dropped to 12 percent compared to 17 percent previously.

Country, the No. 1 insurer of Illinois farms, tracks farm-related deaths through newspaper accounts.

"The fact that farm deaths are on the rise is certainly cause for concern, especially the significant increase in casualties stemming from roadway collisions," said Jeff Gendron, senior vice president of property/casualty operations for Country. "We need to increase awareness of these issues, and that's why Country participates annually in National Farm Safety and Health Week."

To boost awareness of increasing casualties, "Rural Roadway Safety — Alert, Aware and Alive" is the theme for National Farm Safety and Health Week Sept. 20-26.

According to the University of Iowa, 60 injuries occurred from roadway collisions involving farm equipment in Illinois in

2007. Injuries jumped to 74 in 2008.

The New England Journal of Medicine recently reported that rural crashes are more frequent and severe than urban crashes. Rural crashes are also more likely to result in death, with nearly 54 percent of crashes resulting in one or more fatalities.

According to Gendron, lack of awareness contributes to a majority of roadway accidents.

Both farmers and motorists need to exercise more caution on the road and remain alert at all times. Motorists should closely watch the farm vehicle's signals and never follow too closely.

When farmers move their equipment, they might want to have a vehicle follow them to increase their visibility of the equipment ahead.

### Illinois Farm Death Statistics

Leading causes of farm deaths -- 2008-09

Accident Type	No. of Deaths
Tractor Roll-Over	10
Roadway Collision	8
Grain Bin Incident	4

Year (July 1-June 30)	No. of Deaths
1995-1996	27
1996-1997	31
1997-1998	29
1998-1999	38
1999-2000	31
2000-2001	38
2001-2002	22
2002-2003	24
2003-2004	21
2004-2005	31
2005-2006	32
2006-2007	22
2007-2008	29
2008-2009	33

## Country, sheriffs spread roadway safety message

Gib Cady knows first-hand the tragedy of rural roadway collisions. They make up half of the incidents to which the Henry County sheriff and his deputies respond.

As a lifelong county resident, Cady often finds familiar faces among the victims of these incidents. For those reasons, he plans to use the Sept. 20-26 National Farm Safety and Health Week theme, "Rural Roadway Safety — Alert, Aware and Alive," to create added awareness and reduce farm equipment collisions.

According to a Country Financial annual survey, roadway collisions involving farm equipment accounted for 24 percent of Illinois farm deaths from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009. Roadway collisions ranked as the second-leading cause of farm deaths behind tractor rollovers.

"Roadway safety requires a continuous educational program. Our county Farm Bureau is good about making sure farmers have new, properly placed slow moving vehicle (SMV) symbols on their equipment," Cady says of the red and orange SMV triangle.

Displaying SMV symbols properly constitutes only part of roadway safety education. Cady recently helped the Illinois Sheriff's Association create a new Highway and Farm Safety Committee to address rural roadway crashes. Cady, ISA president, wants to find a method to measure roadway incidents involving farm equipment throughout Illinois.

The committee and members of the Illinois Roadway Safety Group, which includes Country, have discussed developing a roadway crash form. The form could be used by law enforcement first responders to

gather data about collision causes and injuries. Data could then be used to increase roadway safety awareness for farmers and rural motorists and reduce rural roadway collisions.

"The worst accidents seem to involve farm tractors. It's difficult to pull up to something like that. We need to do everything we can to prevent roadway collisions and save lives," says Cady.

To further increase roadway safety awareness, Cady and his 76 deputies plan to distribute a new Illinois Farm Bureau brochure to motorists at events throughout the summer. "Share the Road Safely" includes tips for rural motorists and farmers.

Cady says rural motorists can prevent collisions by:

- Taking their foot off the gas as soon as they see farm equipment.
- Passing farm equipment only if they know conditions are safe.
- Exercising extreme caution on rural roadway hills and curves.
- Farmers sharing the road should remember to:
  - Avoid peak traffic hours and the busiest roads when moving farm equipment.
  - Use escort vehicles when moving equipment. Escort vehicles should closely follow farm equipment to afford the highest visibility and warning.
  - Pull over and allow traffic to pass if road and shoulder conditions are safe.

"Every second in life is a second that cannot be relived, especially if that last second is the last second of your life," says Cady. "Don't carelessly waste your seconds."

## Farmer champions awareness for improved roadway safety

While driving down U.S. 24 in his tractor, Daryl Hodel took one final look over his shoulder. Beyond the large wagon he was towing, he saw his wife, Deb, driving behind him in a pickup. Two semis loomed behind in the distance.

With his turn fast approaching, Hodel flipped on his left turn signal to warn the oncoming semis not to pass.

Yet the trucks weren't slowing down. Back in the pickup, his wife realized the trucks had no intention of slowing. She immediately called her husband and warned him not to make the turn.

Hodel heeded the warning. Shortly after hanging up his cell phone, the semis barreled past and overtook them both.

"The trucks just blew right by," Hodel remarks. "If I had made the turn, I wouldn't be here today."

Situations like this are a common occurrence for farmers who often put their lives on the line when transporting their slow-moving farm equipment along rural roadways. This is especially true during fall, which is a peak time for harvest activity.

According to the Country Financial farm death survey, five Illinois farmers died from roadway collisions involving farm equipment from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009. Two farmers were attempting to turn left. This type of roadway accident is the second leading cause of farm deaths.

Hodel, a Country Financial client who owns a 2,200-acre farm near El Paso in Woodford County, also wants to boost roadway safety awareness. He has been working with the Illinois Farm Bureau to petition manufacturers to improve farm equipment

signaling devices.

According to Hodel, inadequate signal lights on the back of farm equipment could be a major cause of accidents involving farmers making left turns.

"All of the flashers and blinkers are yellow. We need a set of red blinkers with arrows to show we're turning," says Hodel. "Oftentimes, drivers don't even realize these farming vehicles are turning, which causes them to pass the machine at unsafe times."

He believes an independent blinking signal in the shape of a directional arrow would provide much-improved visibility for rural drivers. So far, farming equipment lacks a distinctive, arrow-shaped turn signal. However, progress is under way.

Recently Hodel and other Woodford County Farm Bureau members proposed the signal idea to the Illinois Farm Bureau Resolutions Committee.

"Subcommittee members agreed the current signaling system is inadequate," says Kevin Rund, IFB senior director of local government. "However, they decided the proposal required additional investigation into making it more cost-effective to farmers and manufacturers."

In the meantime, Hodel knows farmers and motorists share equal responsibility for roadway safety.

"Drivers need to keep their distance and remain patient. We don't always turn at normal places. We need to swing right before turning left because our equipment is so large. Most importantly, motorists should make sure to always closely watch farm equipment's signals."

## Board attendance

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
Jay Winkelmann, Pres	X	X	X	X	C	X		X
Terry Entwistle, VP	X	X	X	X	A	X	X	X
Bill Montgomery, Sec	X	X	X	X	N	X	X	X
Terry Steinhour, Treas	X	X	X		C	X	X	X
Vernon Argo	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X
David Evers	X		X	X	L	X	X	X
David Leischner	X	X	X	X	E			X
Mark Stewart	X	X	X	X	D	X		X
Kyle Winkelmann	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

## Welcome!

The Menard County Farm Bureau would like to welcome the following new members:

- Tyler Willis
- Edward Hopwood
- Thomas Wood
- Megan Conklin
- John Hardy
- Whitney Paulus
- Jacqueline Shannon

Thank you for your support of Menard County agriculture!

2008

## Menard County Plat Books

for sale at the Menard County Farm Bureau

\$25 each