

Higher Education on Tractor Safety

Learn everything you ever wanted to know about safe tractor operation.

By Toni McAllister/Reviewed by Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory

If you're new to tractors, finding a qualified teacher who can tutor you on the ins and outs of safe driving and operation can be difficult, but now there's a national program designed to train users on safe tractor operation. The National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Certification Program (NSTMOP), originally developed in 2001 at Pennsylvania State University with funding from the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, teaches participants all aspects of tractor operation, including tractor driving, tractor safety, tractor maintenance, engine mechanics, hooking and unhooking attachments and more.

The NSTMOP was originally designed for youth who work on farms. In order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act, youth between the ages of 14 to 16 years of age must be certified through NSTMOP in order to legally operate tractors and certain machinery on farms. However, there are many horse owners over 16 who need tractor training too. NSTMOP doesn't discriminate against "older" participants and welcomes anyone who wants to learn safe tractor operation. To find a NSTMOP training facility, contact your local county extension office or visit www.nstmop.psu.edu for a list of instructors in your area.

To start, here are some basic tips to ensure your safety while operating a tractor.

1. Never allow children to ride on or drive the tractor.
2. Don't speed up and down hills.
3. Always wear shoes with laces—no flip flops.
4. Always wear earplugs to prevent hearing loss.
5. Always put the safety brake on when getting off the tractor.
6. Don't drive too fast.
7. On steep slopes, drive up backward to prevent a rollover.
8. Don't drive in wet/muddy fields.
9. Don't overload a front-end loader.
10. Never, ever drive a tractor that doesn't feature a rollover protection structure (ROPS).
11. Wear a seatbelt.
12. Turn engine off before getting out of the driver's seat.
13. Don't let riders onboard.
14. Don't wear loose clothing while operating a tractor; tie long hair back and up.
15. Wear boots during tractor operation.
16. Make sure the PTO has a shield.
17. Make sure engine is off and power is disengaged before inspecting a tractor for problems.

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