

Tractor rollover: What it is and how it can be prevented

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EXTRACT

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With less than a month to go until the spring, farmers are starting to think about their terrain as it softens so they can turn over the soil and let a new planting season begin. But given that Canada's land area can be filled with peaks and valleys - not to mention the power farming equipment has - accidents still occur when people least expect them.

With this in mind, here are a few tips to remember to prevent tractor overturns, one of the most common safety issues a farmer faces.

One of the biggest reasons why tractors overturn is users not compensating for their center of gravity. Typically, tractors have a high center of gravity, so any equipment that the tractor is carrying can cause it tip over when scaling a hill, even if it isn't especially steep.

There are a variety of reasons why tractors flip over, most of them relating to balance. For example, the tractor may be moving at too fast a clip for the terrain. Similarly, the land may be marked with a number of potential trip hazards, like large rocks, stumps or holes. These can be covered up by grass or debris, preventing the driver from being able to see them and causing the tractor to capsize.

Misuse or unfamiliarity with the tractor can cause trouble as well. Tractors frequently have front-end loaders, used for digging or carrying. But if these loaders are raised too high, that too can cause a turnover, especially if the tractor is in a compromising position.

Rollover prevention tips

By being aware of these potential issues, tractor users can reduce the likelihood of tractor rollover. And the best advice for how to avoid it is by using common sense. For example, when turning tight corners, always be sure to slow down, especially if the turn is tight and there is little land available to negotiate the turn.

While the terrain in Ontario can often be hilly, if at all possible, avoid driving on land that has steep slopes. If it can't be avoided, consider riding up the hill backward so that the weight of the tractor remains up front. And when descending the hill, ensure that the engine stays in a low gear.

Similar to driving a car, users should also be cognizant of how they're feeling physically. If drowsy or feeling ill, it's never a good idea to operate a tractor. They should also never be ridden after consuming alcohol or taking certain medications, as reaction times are adversely affected.

According to statistics from the Public Health Agency of Canada, agriculture is one of the most dangerous industries in the country, responsible for a number of injuries that are

typically covered through farm insurance. It's estimated that there are about 40 hospitalizations and 21 fatalities from tractor and other agricultural-related machine rollovers each year.

