

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 19, 2007

Contact: Anne Marie Moss, 503-399-1701, ext. 313, annemarie@oregonfb.org

Farm Bureau promotes rural road safety

Summer marks harvest season for many of Oregon's 220 agriculture products, from blueberries and cherries, to tomatoes and sweet corn. It's a time when more Oregonians head out into the country to purchase fresh produce directly from the folks who grew it.

Though it's easy to be absorbed by the beauty of the bucolic countryside, Oregon Farm Bureau urges drivers to please take special care when traveling on rural roads this summer.

Because of deceptively sharp turns, exposed hazards like trees or fences, steep slopes, and pavement edge drop-offs, the potential dangers of driving in the country should not be underestimated.

Although there are fewer crashes in rural areas, they tend to be more severe than urban car accidents. Probably due to higher speeds, twice as many fatalities happen on country roads than on city streets. According to the Oregon Department of Transportation, there were 10,338 crashes on rural road areas in 2005, with 303 fatal accidents. Comparatively, on urban roads, there were 34,540 total crashes in 2005 with only 141 fatal accidents.

Also, because it is harvest season, large farming equipment is more likely to be out on rural roads during the summer months. Most of these vehicles are designed to operate at speeds of no more than 25 mph and are required to display a Slow-Moving Vehicle sign — a triangular sign with a red reflectorized border and a fluorescent orange-red center. If you come upon a vehicle with an SMV sign, slow down immediately.

Consider this: ODOT reports that a car traveling 55 mph requires about 224 feet to stop on dry pavement, assuming average reaction time and braking. A car traveling 55 mph can close a 300-foot gap (the length of a football field) and overtake a tractor moving at 15 mph in about 5 seconds. If drivers do not begin to slow as soon as they see a farm vehicle, they might not have time to avoid a collision.

Oregon Farm Bureau offers a few simple safety tips for sharing the road safely with slow-moving farming equipment:

- When you see the triangular, red and orange slow-moving vehicle sign, slow down immediately.
- Be patient. A farmer understands that your trip is being delayed; he or she will pull off of the road at the first available location to allow you to pass.
- If you must pass a farm vehicle, do not assume the driver knows you are there. Pass with caution.
- Don't assume when a farm vehicle pulls to the right, it is making a right-hand turn or letting you pass. Some large pieces of equipment must execute wide left-hand

- turns. If you are unsure, check the operator's hand signals and look at the left side of the road for gates, driveways, or any place a farm vehicle might turn into.
- Triangular SMV signs are for slow-moving vehicles only, not stationary objects like driveways, mail boxes, or fences. Instead use reflective tape or another type of reflective sign.

To help educate the public on the proper use of SMV signs and how to share the roads with farming equipment, Oregon Farm Bureau has created a Rural Road Safety brochure.

To request free copies, contact Anne Marie Moss, OFB Communications Director, at (503) 399-1701, ext. 313, or e-mail annemarie@oregonfb.org. Or download the brochure at www.oregonfb.org.

Farm Bureau thanks the Oregon Department of Transportation, which sponsored the printing of the Rural Road Safety publication.

* Note to Editors: Please capitalize "Farm Bureau" in all cases. *

###

About Oregon Farm Bureau

Farm Bureau is a non-partisan, independent, nongovernmental, voluntary organization of farming and ranching families united for the purpose of finding positive solutions to the challenges facing the agriculture and natural resource communities.

Oregon Farm Bureau traces its roots to 1919 when the Umatilla County Farm Bureau was established in the heart of the state's wheat country. OFB was formally incorporated in 1932. In December 2007, the organization will celebrate its 75th anniversary.

Farm Bureau is organized in all 36 Oregon counties. Today, OFB has over 54,000 total member families, making it the largest general agricultural organization in the state. About 8,800 member families are professionally engaged in agriculture. Barry Bushue, an east Multnomah County berry and nursery producer, is OFB's 15th president.

Oregon Farm Bureau
ph: (503) 399-1701
fax: (503) 399-8082
www.oregonfb.org
3415 Commercial St. SE
Salem, OR 97302