

MEDIA RELEASE
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STAY ON THE SAFE SIDE: NEVER CIRCUMVENT SAFETY MECHANISMS

Considering recent statistics showing that tractors and quad bikes are once again the main agents of fatality on Australian farms, Farmsafe Australia is using National Farm Safety Week to speak to farmers about the importance of tractor, vehicle and machinery safety. In particular, emphasising the importance of staying on the safe side by utilising and maintaining tractor safety systems as intended and refraining from any practices that compromise the effectiveness of these mechanisms.

As the backbone of our agricultural industry, farmers play a vital role in feeding our nation and beyond. Recognising their dedication and commitment, it is equally important to underscore the significance of ensuring a safe working environment. Agriculture is currently the most dangerous Australian industry to work in, with the most recent Safe Work Australia benchmarking statistics showing an average of 10.4 fatalities per 100 000 workers (2021).

Tractor safety systems are specifically designed to protect operators and reduce the risk of injuries and fatalities by overriding the one commonality across all injuries and fatalities: human error. These systems include roll-over protection structures (ROPS), seat belts, power take-off (PTO) guards, and other safety features integrated into modern tractors. Unfortunately, there have been instances where farmers have modified or disabled these safety mechanisms, unnecessarily exposing themselves to risks and hazards.

Farmsafe Australia's Chairperson, Felicity Richards, underscored the importance of agricultural safety innovations by saying, "While we understand that farmers have reasons for modifying safety systems on tractors, it is crucial to acknowledge the risks involved. These safety measures are not arbitrary; they have been implemented to safeguard the lives and well-being of farmers, farm workers and their families."

By circumventing safety systems, farmers jeopardise their own safety and potentially others. Tractor-related incidents can result in severe injuries, loss of life, property damage, and financial burden. By adhering to proper safety practices and utilising the provided safety systems, farmers can significantly reduce the risk of such incidents.

Prior to the 1980's, tractor fatalities on farms were primarily attributed to rollovers. However, the implementation of legislation requiring the use of rollover protection structures (ROPS) on tractors resulted in a remarkable reduction of over 70% in rollover-related fatalities. This significant decline stands as one of the most impactful and pivotal safety advancements in modern agricultural practices, highlighting the significance of embracing safety technology.

Farmsafe Australia recommends the following to promote tractor safety and discourage the circumvention of safety systems:

- Understand the purpose: Familiarise yourself with the safety features installed on your tractor and recognise their importance in preventing fatal incidents and minimising injury.
- Resist modifications: Avoid altering or disabling safety systems.
- Advocate for education: Encourage discussions within the farming community about the importance of tractor safety. Share information and resources to raise awareness and promote responsible practices.
- Stay informed: Regularly check for safety updates and recall notices provided by tractor manufacturers. Stay updated on new safety technologies and guidelines that can enhance the protection provided by your equipment.

Farmsafe Australia remains committed to supporting farmers and ensuring their well-being. We strongly encourage farmers to prioritise safety by respecting and utilising tractor safety systems. By doing so, we can collectively work towards a safer and more prosperous agricultural industry.

To find more information and educational resources on tractor and machinery safety, visit: farmsafe.org.au.

About Farmsafe Australia:

Farmsafe Australia is the leading industry voice dedicated to promoting farm safety, providing educational resources, and advocating for best practices in the agricultural industry. With a mission to reduce injury and fatality on Australian farms and protect the well-being of farmers and their families, Farmsafe Australia actively collaborates with industry stakeholders and raises awareness about the importance of safety in agricultural operations.

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For more information or to request an interview with Felicity Richards, Chair of Farmsafe Australia, please contact:

Blake Hillier
Stakeholder Engagement Officer
0419 955 546
bhillier@farmsafe.org.au