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Drivers, farmers can safely share the road

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Warmer weather is here and the planting season is well underway throughout much of Maryland. That means motorists traveling Maryland highways and rural roads may find themselves sharing the road with the large, slow-moving farm equipment from one of Maryland's 12,300 farms.

"Farmers are legally allowed to operate farm equipment on public roadways and there are times when farm vehicles must operate on highways to move between farm and field," said Agriculture Secretary Joe Bartenfelder. "I encourage all motorists to be patient when traveling on roads near Maryland farms and drive with caution to ensure the safety of motorists and farmers."

A farmer understands that your trip is being delayed, so he or she will pull off the road at the first available safe location to allow you to pass. Do not assume the farmer can immediately move aside to let you pass. Road shoulders may be soft, wet or steep, and this can cause a farm vehicle to tip, or the shoulder may be unable to support a heavy farm vehicle.

The following tips will help ensure the safety of motorists, passengers and operators of slow-moving equipment:

- If a farmer has pulled off the road to allow you to pass, or if he or she cannot pull off the road and you feel you must pass, do so with caution.

- Be watchful of vehicles behind you that may also try to pass.
- If you must enter the oncoming lane of traffic, do not pass unless you can see clearly ahead of both you and the vehicle you will pass.
- If there are any curves or hills ahead that may block your view or the view of oncoming vehicles, do not pass.



- Do not pass if you are in a designated “No Passing Zone” or within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevation structure or tunnel.
- Do not assume that a farm vehicle that pulls to the right side of the road is going to turn right or is letting you pass. Due to the size of some farm implements, the farmer must execute wide left-hand turns. If you are unsure, check the operator’s hand signals and check the left side of the road for gates, driveways or any place a farm vehicle may turn.

With a few precautions, motorists and farmers can share the road safely.