



**State the needs, goals, and objectives of this activity:**

Need: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that the agricultural sector remains the most dangerous in America with 573 fatalities, or an equivalent of 23.1 deaths per 100,000 workers. In 2020, our state department of transportation reported 270 motor vehicle crashes involving farm equipment including 71 that resulted in injuries and 5 that resulted in fatalities. In our own county, a fatal roadway accident in the spring of 2022 claimed the life of a farmer who was driving a tractor on a state highway.

**Objectives:**

1. Promote safety on rural roads and increase awareness of the unique safety challenges of farm equipment
2. To reduce and prevent motor vehicle accidents and injuries involving farm equipment
3. Reach target audience of high school sophomores and juniors as newly licensed or soon to be licensed drivers in the seven rural school districts in our county with a hands-on learning experience
4. Provide an opportunity for students to put faces with farmers and strengthen connections between farmers and local schools
5. Build partnerships with local ag retailers to provide additional equipment for school safety demonstrations
6. Promote a positive image of Farm Bureau as a community organization seeking to promote safety for farmers as well as local youth and community members

**Goals:**

1. Coordinate Rural Route Safety Days with at least four rural school districts per year, two in the spring semester and two in the fall semester
2. Use social media, member publications and local media outlets to reach a larger audience with roadway safety tips for farmers and motorists
3. Provide a high impact, engaging and hands-on learning opportunity to students

**Describe the planning process the county/counties developed for this activity:**

Our community engagement committee developed the plan for Rural Route Safety Days and drafted a program template. The program plan outlined the responsibilities of the Farm Bureau and the school district. Our County Farm Bureau lined up the equipment and volunteers. The school district provided space in their parking lot and coordinated the schedule for students to participate. We worked with the high school ag teachers at each school district our initial point of contact to obtain school administration permission and coordinate scheduling. The program template also outlined activities and talking points for three activity stations. Students spent

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about 10 minutes at each station and rotated through to visit each one. The program is designed for groups of 10-15 students at each station so that each one has the chance to climb into the tractor cab and participate in the hands-on activities.

#### **Planning timeline:**

4-5 weeks in advance of the event: contact ag teachers and select the date

4 weeks in advance: confirmed the date and location details with the farmers and/or ag retailers bringing the equipment

3 weeks in advance: recruit activity station volunteers

1 week in advance: confirm the schedule including number of students per time slot and timing for equipment arrival/departure around school bus schedule

3 days in advance: send final schedule and station talking points to volunteers

Day of event: set up cones/rope off area of parking lot, conduct activity stations, take pictures, post on social media

Post event: write articles for member publications, send thank you notes to volunteers, ag teachers & school districts for participating

#### **Explain how you implemented/carried out/executed this activity:**

At the beginning of March 2022, we contacted the ag teachers at two local high schools about scheduling Rural Route Safety Programs and sent them the program outline. We scheduled one event for March 28 and a second event April 8. At the first high school, we had a local farmer bring his tractor with planter attached and a local ag retailer provided a self-propelled sprayer. At the second high school, another farmer brought his tractor with planter attached, semi and self-propelled sprayer. As space allowed, we also parked a car behind the equipment and/or use traffic cones to demonstrate blind spots and visibility. County Farm Bureau staff coordinated the communication and recruited volunteers to participate. The ag teachers worked with school staff to identify and cordon off an area in the school parking lot to host the event as well as coordinate the schedule with the driver's education program and other faculty to allow students to participate.

At each event, we had three stations set-up:

- Station 1. Visibility - students climbed in the tractor/equipment cab to gauge visibility from the farmer's perspective, discussed why farmers are on the road, blind spots and distracted driving
- Station 2. Following Safely - pointed out SMV signs, discussed brake lights vs. flashers, talked about safe following distance, braking distance & closing speed

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- Station 3. Passing Safely - students used a measuring tape to measure the height & width of the equipment, compared the size of the equipment tires to the size of a typical passenger car, talked about roadway lane widths & passing safely

A volunteer was assigned to each station to lead the activities and share talking points. Volunteers were encouraged to share personal experiences to emphasize the need for precautions to help everyone arrive at their destination safely. Farm Bureau staff served as the time keeper to announce when students should rotate to the next station.

**What makes this activity unique, or how does it bring new focus to the county Farm Bureau's mission?**

Rural Route Safety Days offer a unique, hands-on learning experience for local students. Even in our rural school districts, few students have direct exposure to farm equipment and for some students the event is the first time they have climbed in a tractor cab. The event offers the opportunity to showcase Farm Bureau's values of community service and safety. Local farmers engage directly with students and share their story, helping students put a face to the farmers who grow safe and abundant food, fiber and renewable fuel for our nation and the world. Rural Route Safety Days has also strengthened our relationship with local school districts and our partnership with local FFA chapters.

**What were the results of this activity, including the impact and benefit to Farm Bureau and/or the local community?**

Rural Route Safety Days successfully reached 107 students at the first high school and 115 students at the second high school. We received positive feedback from both ag teachers and school districts for both of the events. Social media posts about the events reached an additional 2,316 people on Facebook. We also included coverage of the event in our member publications that reach about 11,500 members. We have two Rural Route Safety Days scheduled at two more of our rural high schools for September 2022. We plan to continue offering the program on a rotating basis with the goal of hosting one at each of the rural high schools every other year. We plan to send out a media advisory in advance of the events and to gain additional coverage bringing public awareness about sharing the road safely to the general public in our local communities. The community engagement committee has also discussed the possibility of setting up a similar program at local community festivals and/or the county fair to reach a wider age range of drivers.