



OSHA ROPS and Operator Instruction Requirements

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The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), in 1976, issued a standard requiring rollover protective structures (ROPS) for agricultural tractors. The standard also includes certain instructions for employees who operate the tractors. Although OSHA requirements are enforced only on farms where there are eleven or more employees, the safety features are applicable to all operators. The intent is to reduce accidents no matter who is involved.

ROPS Requirements

OSHA requires that all agricultural tractors* manufactured after October 25, 1976 meet the following requirements:

- A ROPS must be provided on each tractor operated by an employee.
- Where ROPS are required, each tractor must be equipped with a seatbelt.
- The employer must insure that each employee tightens the seatbelt sufficiently to confine the employee to the protected area provided by the ROPS while the tractor is moving.
- Batteries, fuel tanks, oil reservoirs, and coolant systems must be constructed and located so spillage will not contact the operator in the event of an upset.
- All sharp edges and corners at the operator's station must be designed to minimize injury in case of an upset.

Exemptions

- Low profile tractors** while used in orchards, vineyards, farm buildings or greenhouses where vertical height would interfere with normal operations.
- Tractors while used with mounted equipment that is incompatible with ROPS such as corn pickers.

Operating Instructions

Every employee who operates *any* agricultural tractor must be informed of the operating practices below and any other practices necessary to maintain a safe working environment. Such information must be provided at the initial assignment and at least once a year thereafter. This part of the standard became effective June 1, 1975.

1. Securely fasten your seatbelt if the tractor has a ROPS.
2. Where possible, avoid operating the tractor near ditches, embankments, and holes.
3. Reduce speed when turning, crossing slopes, and on rough, slick, or muddy surfaces.
4. Stay off slopes too steep for safe operation.
5. Watch where you are going, especially at row ends, on roads, and around trees.
6. Do not permit other to ride.
7. Operate the tractor smoothly-no jerky turns, starts, or stops.

*Agricultural tractor is a two or four-wheel drive or track vehicle of more than 20 engine horsepower designed to furnish power to implements for agriculture. Self-propelled implements are not included.

**A tractor with front wheel spacing equal to rear wheel spacing, ground clearance to bottom of chassis not more than 18 inches, highest point of the hood not greater than 60 inches and operator straddles the transmission when seated.

8. Hitch only to the drawbar and hitch points recommended by tractor manufacturers.
9. When tractor is stopped, set brakes securely and use park lock if available.

Although OSHA does not require that employers document that employees have been instructed about safe operation procedures, it would be desirable for the farm employer to keep some record of this activity. Such a record might prove useful in handling employee grievances, lawsuits, or insurance claims.

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