

News Column

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## TRACTOR SAFETY

I've told the same stories at least 100 times, but I'm really not looking for new stories to replace them. I already know enough families who have been impacted by farm accidents. I don't need new names to add to the list.

When I was 13 years old, the brother of one of my closest friends was killed in a tractor accident. Rodney was just a year older than us, 14 years old when he died. He was a friend to my brother, who was also 14 at the time.

The tractor was a small Ford tractor, built before tractors came equipped with cabs. It was also built before tractors were equipped with roll bars. The tractor rolled over backwards while trying to go up a hill in a pasture.

Nobody knows for sure if Rodney stopped part way up the hill, then popped the clutch, but that's probably what happened. He was using the tractor much the way someone would use an ATV today, to drive around the family milk cow and bring her back to the barn. If she stopped, he probably stopped too, and flipped the tractor when he tried to start up again.

I tell these stories to get your attention, and to give you a feel for why I think tractor safety is such an important topic. Without even thinking hard, I can name four families who have lost a family member in a tractor accident.

The number of close-to-home deaths climbs to eight if you count an ATV accident, a skid loader rollover, and two pickups running over their operators when they stepped out without

applying the emergency brake. And, these aren't names I've just read in the newspaper. These are all families that I know pretty well – I'd call them friends.

So, when it comes time to prepare for and advertise our annual tractor safety course, I'm on board.

### Tractor Safety Course – June 7 & 8, 2016

This year's tractor safety course – aka Hazardous Occupations Safety Training in Agriculture, or HOSTA – will be held on Tuesday, June 7 and Wednesday, June 8, 2016 at KanEquip in Wamego. The class will run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on day one, and from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on day two. A \$30 enrollment fee covers course materials and lunch both days.

The course is taught by KSU Extension Agents from Pottawatomie, Riley, Shawnee, and Wabaunsee counties and is recommended for students age 12 and older. Any youth age 14 or 15 who will operate a tractor for someone other than their parent is required to pass the course to be legally employed. Youths as 12 and 13 are welcome to participate, but can't be certified until age 14.

Actual driving time is not a part of the course, but is required for certification. At the end of the two-day session we will issue what we call a "training completion statement". The training completion notes that the student has completed class work and is ready for at least two hours of hands-on instruction by their parent or employer. Once that has been completed, then the official certificate can be issued.

Somebody always asks why we don't teach the driving portion of the course too and the answer is simple. I did that once!

The deadline to enroll is June 1. The preferred method of enrollment is online at [www.pottawatomie.ksu.edu](http://www.pottawatomie.ksu.edu).

If you have questions you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmcclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmcclure@ksu.edu).

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