



## *Safety First When Harvesting Sugarbeets*

*Sugarbeet harvest involves a lot of equipment and people. Growers should take a little extra time and precautions to make it a safe harvest.*

Agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations. The combination of large equipment, a lot of people and poor environmental conditions can be a hazardous mix. Many times in the haste of getting the job done, judgmental mistakes can easily turn into an accident. Over the years, Michigan State University Extension Sugarbeet Advancement program has been involved in over two hundred trials during commercial harvesting of sugarbeets. Many observations have been made on “accidents waiting to happen” during harvest time. With a little extra precaution many of these potential accidents can be avoided.

Farm operators need to make sure to remind employees of obvious potential dangers and caution them particularly about being behind equipment. Blind spots behind equipment lead to accidents when equipment is backing up.

Growers often utilize older retired personal for trucking and operating equipment. If these individuals are unfamiliar with equipment or become tired, judgment and response time will be effected. Often young children may also be in the cab during harvest. If leaving the cab with a child left in it, be sure that equipment is shut off. Young children like to play with knobs and buttons when bored and can easily shift a tractor in gear, engage PTO or hydraulics.

Overhead power lines are a constant danger. Reminding truck and cart operators about power lines when starting new fields may not be enough to avoid an accident. Force tare piles and loading away from power lines as well as placing reminders like cones under power lines will help. Entrance to the field should be marked so that truckers do not cut the corners and potentially tip the truck over. Be sure when a loaded truck is entering the road a clear vision of sight is needed. Truckers may want to use flashers when entering the road so that cars are aware of a slow moving vehicle. Roadways should be kept clean and scraped and be posted with caution signs. It is the trucker’s responsibility to make sure loads are checked so that no beets will fall off trucks during transport.

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