



# UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## BEHIND THE STAR

SHERIFF MALCUM J. "JAMIE" PATTON



## Living in an Agricultural Community

With summer ending, harvest season is just starting for farmers. "Living in an agricultural community that continues to grow yearly, the Union County Sheriff's Office wants to pass on some essential information when it comes to sharing the roads with our farmers," says Sheriff Patton.

The Sheriff's Office receives complaints and questions yearly about farm equipment on the roads, laws governing farm equipment, and the width of farm implements taken on the roadway. Over the past several decades, the size of farm equipment being manufactured has grown substantially, while the width of roads generally has yet to. At certain times of the day, getting around slow-moving farm equipment can be very challenging. Motorists are often frustrated when moving slowly behind a large farm equipment. A long line of traffic usually develops behind the farm equipment, with everyone trying to get around and continue. Consider a farmer's vital role in our society and economy as frustrating as it is. Consider how hard it is for a farmer to drive farm equipment on the roads in Union County, one of Ohio's fastest-growing counties. Farmers have a job to do, just like the rest of us. The best way to educate the public is to share frequently asked questions we are often asked. The hope is this article helps you understand some of the laws governing farm equipment and the need for us to safely share the roadways during the harvest season.

Q. What is considered farm machinery?

According to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 4501.01, farm machinery is defined as all machines and tools that are used in the production, harvesting, and care of farm products and includes trailers that are used to transport agricultural products or agricultural production materials between a local place of storage or supply and the farm, agricultural tractors, threshing machinery, hay-baling machinery, corn shellers, hammer mills, and machinery used in the production of horticultural, agricultural, and vegetable products.

Q. Are there width requirements or restrictions for farm machinery to travel up and down the road?

According to Ohio Revised Code (ORC) section 5577.05, vehicles operated on roadways are limited to specific lengths, widths, and heights. ORC section 5577.05 (G) states that farm machinery and equipment are exempt from the size standards as long as the equipment is pulled or operated on the road. If the same piece of machinery is loaded or transported on a truck or trailer, they are not exempt from the size regulations.

Q. Doesn't the farm equipment have to stay on its side of the roadway?

No, an Appeals Court ruling says that farm equipment traveling on the roadways is not required to yield to coming traffic. The ruling stated that it is not the farmer's fault that the road is not adequate width to handle the machinery. The farmer should yield to oncoming traffic, but if they don't, they have not violated any laws. Thus, they are not criminally liable.

Q. Can I legally pass a piece of farm machinery on a solid yellow line?

Yes, ORC section 4511.31(B) states that if the slow-moving vehicle is proceeding at less than half the posted speed limit, you may overtake the car if you do not exceed the speed limit. You must also have a clear sight distance to the left of the center or center line of the roadway to overtake the vehicle safely and not interfere with oncoming traffic. All other laws that pertain to overtaking and passing a car traveling in the same direction still apply.

Q. Aren't farmers required to tear down or reduce the size of their equipment before moving down the roadway?

No, they are not. However, many do because they want to avoid hitting mailboxes, road signs, utility wires, or other things along their traveling route.

Q. Why don't farmers pull over and let traffic around them?

Farmers are not required to do this. However, most farmers realize they share the roadways and that people have places to go and things to do. Many will pull over when they can safely do so to allow traffic around them. Sometimes, however, they should get to their location as quickly as possible so they are out of everyone's way. Pulling over and letting traffic go around them can create other issues and sometimes be more hazardous than not doing so.

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